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Hanne Van Reusel

THE COMMONS ARCHITECT.E  
ALTERING URBAN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN BRUSSELS

February 2019

KU LEUVEN

ARENBERG DOCTORAL SCHOOL

FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

SCUOLA DI DOTTORATO

DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA E DESIGN

# The Commons Architect.e

altering urban architectural design in Brussels.

**Hanne Van Reusel**

Supervisors:  
Prof. dr. Burak Pak  
Prof. dr. Johan Verbeke († 2017)

Co-Supervisor:  
Prof. dr. Luca Caneparo  
Prof. dr. Dag Boutsen

Dissertation presented in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Architecture at  
KU Leuven and Doctor of Philosophy  
in Architecture, History and Project at  
Politecnico di Torino

February 2019

The urban architectural design (uAD) practice, in essence, deals with the everyday livelihood of people. However, uAD is not disconnected from neoliberal mechanisms and urban governance. Frictions that emerge from profit-driven urban development and undemocratic politics in city making, represented by the personas of Economic Man and his architectural associate Modern Architect, call for another approach. As an architect, a researcher, and an urban activist, I have explored how I can support communities in their ambition to take another, commons-oriented direction in the uAD of our city, Brussels. This exploration is driven by a “(be)longing” that entails a desire to improve quality of life and democratization through uAD.

Through four years of doctoral research and design practice more than a hundred actions and events have contributed to building up the self-proclaimed transitional use of the Josaphat site. As 25 hectares big nature zone, Josaphat awaits its transition from post-industrial land into a brand new district. Its symbolic status provides the fertile breeding ground for a “living lab at large” around which an electrifying air is forming, loaded with potential to develop other approaches in uAD.

Design-Based participatory action research has allowed exploring an “altering” -approaching otherness as a strength- uAD practice. Three everyday architectural projects –a house, a garden, and a kitchen- and their underlying commoning approach towards construction, housing, community building, ecological systems, food production and economy... are together represented through the persona of the Commons Architect.e. She stands as an unheroic model for a critical spatial practitioner that is caring, constructive, pragmatic, improvised and revolting.

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KU Leuven  
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# **The Commons Architect.e**

altering urban architectural design in Brussels

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Prof. dr. Luca Caneparo

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Prof. dr. Doina Petrescu

Prof. dr. Nel Janssens

Ms. An Descheemaeker

Dr. Caroline Newton

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# 00.01

abstract

HOW DO YOU ENVISAGE  
OUR FUTURE CITY ?

*In spite of the improvised paths made out of bark, your feet sink in the muddy earth. You slow down your step and cautiously continue your path.*

*Welcome to Josaphat's ground, welcome to Brussels' swampy landscape of urban architectural design.*

*Once you get through the most slippery part, you stand still and look up. You allow your gaze to open up along the wildish meadow. You breath the cold air. You feel the spaciousness simmer in your body. You wonder. You daydream.*

*Welcome to Josaphat's electrifying air. An air loaded with dazzling potentialities and imaginations of what is possible for our urban world.*

*You stand in the midst of a hidden garden. Just a couple of minutes before you were in the chaotic and rushed everyday of Brussels public space.*

*Say goodbye to the toxic blend of streets prioritizing king car, constricted spaces between delineating facades and the dull anonymity of the consumption-oriented public space.*

*A group of people is seated around a big somewhat crooked table in front of a small wooden house. The smoke coming from its chimney promises you warmth. Dishes and pots with colorful world cuisine are carried out of a red-colored caravan nearby.*

*Welcome to the rough materiality and homely atmosphere of commons public space. Welcome to the (be)longing world of house-garden-and-kitchen urban architectural design.*

*Someone moves aside on one of the self-made benches and invites you to join. Over a hot soup she enthusiastically takes you along in the group's big and small discussions.*

*"So, how do you imagine we can change the future of our city?"*

## The Commons Architect.e

altering the urban architectural design practice in Brussels.

The urban architectural design (uAD) practice, in essence, deals with the everyday livelihood of people. However, uAD is not disconnected from neoliberal mechanisms and urban governance. Frictions that emerge from profit-driven urban development and undemocratic politics in city making, represented by the personas of Economic Man and his architectural associate Modern Architect, call for another approach. As an architect, a researcher, and an urban activist, I have explored how I can support communities in their ambition to take another, commons-oriented direction in the uAD of our city, Brussels. This exploration is driven by a “(be)longing” that entails a desire to improve quality of life and democratization through uAD.

Through four years of doctoral research and design practice more than a hundred actions and events have contributed to building up the self-proclaimed transitional use of the Josaphat site. As 25 hectares big nature zone, Josaphat awaits its transition from post-industrial land into a brand new district. Its symbolic status provides the fertile breeding ground for a “living lab at large” around which an electrifying air is forming, loaded with potential to develop other approaches in uAD.

Design-Based participatory action research has allowed exploring an “altering” -approaching otherness as a strength- uAD practice. Three everyday architectural projects –a house, a garden, and a kitchen- and their underlying commoning approach towards construction, housing, community building, ecological systems, food production and economy... are together represented through the persona of the Commons Architect.e. She stands as an unheroic model for a critical spatial practitioner that is caring, constructive, pragmatic, improvised and revolting.

Reflections on the doctoral research and design practice are disseminated through different forms of output that consist of a written account (00 & REC) and visual resources (LL, MAP, TL, P, EXPO). These are underpinned by concepts that flirt with theory as they give consistency to the practice. Altogether, the dissertation delivered three key results:

- ° a criticism towards the current state of affairs of uAD in Brussels, grounded in the experience on and around Josaphat. Approaching Josaphat as both a symbolic and symptomatic ground, the personas of Economic Man and Modern Architect help to address several matters of concern at stake.
- ° an insight into an altering uAD practice that explores the potential of urban commons on the field. This practice entails the exploration of the principles of the commons in practice through a making in the everyday. Specific patterns and adjectives define the being of the Arch.e, while acts and techniques discuss her process of becoming. These provide a range of strategies, characteristics, tools, and methods for an altering practice.
- ° a positioning of the altering uAD practice within the broader movement of participatory design and the Brussels' uAD scene. Here the persona of Participation Architect helps to position the Commons Architect.e within a broader movement of commoning and civic involvement in urbanism. A range of guidelines is provided that could support a hypothetical turning point in Brussels' uAD.

Keywords:

Altering spatial practice – urban architectural design – urban commons – everyday architecture – Brussels urbanism – transitional use - (be)longing – participatory design



00.00

acknowledgments

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have been part of this marvelous journey and/or have been of constant support throughout this endeavor. I am fortunate to have such a plentiful amount of people who have, each in their way, carried me and surrounded me with their expertise, care, kindness, courage, dreams, and love. It is thanks to this bunch of beautiful people this piece of work has been made possible.

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through the complex Brussels planning “machine”. I as well want to express my gratitude to those people within the Brussels administrations (regional and local) for the generous -often off the record- help that made a lot of things possible in what often feels to be a cumbersome framework. More specifically, yet not solely, I want to thank those within the MSI working on Josaphat. It has been, and still is challenging, to reach out from our urban activist ground, yet the fragile trust you have allowed to emerge has been significant to me.

Also, I want to thank the people behind Growfunding, Toestand, Communa, and many more of Brussels innovative community initiatives that make practices of urban commoning -whether explicitly or not- happen in Brussels. Thank you for your support as peers in the field and thank you for what you do for Brussels in general.

Then, not to forget I want to express my gratitude to **my family and friends**. There are so many of you that have been there for me throughout this doctoral endeavor. You took care of me, you comforted me when I had my moments of despair, you beard things through with me when I was overly stressed, and most importantly you made me laugh and feel loved. Thank you.

Let me say that again: t h a n k y o u !

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Projects on Josaphat have been made possible through crowdfunding, the support of the Koning Boudewijn Stichting and the Vlaamse Gemeenschaps Commissie. The public defense and exhibition are hosted by Perspective Brussels.

This PhD is produced as a part of Hanne Van Reusel’s contribution to the Altering Practices for Urban Inclusion Research Group at the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture.

# 00.02

introduction

## WELCOME TO THE ALTERING SCENE

*Ik schrijf gedichten en als ik ze de volgende ochtend  
herlees, besef ik nog maar eens dat schrijven niet alleen  
een vorm is van denken (met je hele lichaam), maar  
vooral van spreken over hoe je niet kunt spreken (niet  
door antwoorden te geven, maar door de oorspronkelijke  
vraag elke keer met andere woorden te stellen.*

- P. Verhelst (2018, p. 217)

*In the conventional theater of urban architectural design (uAD<sup>1</sup>) Modern Architect has played the leading role for too long now. He has overly exclaimed his outworn speech in favor of positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance and self-interest. Directed by his by-profit-driven friend Economic Man, he still claims most of the space on the stage of uAD.*

*It is about time to shake up practice as usual; enters in the unheroic character of Commons Architect.e. Not having a role assigned to her, she has jumped on the stage as she seeks to shake up the underwritten narrative of the hackneyed play. Different than the Participation Architect who has found his position as antagonist of Modern Architect, the Commons Architect.e wants to change the whole scene.*

*Fairly new to the stage, the Commons Architect.e aims to shuffle the scene. She tweaks the décors and skillfully plays with the space and materials that have been left aside. In her seemingly small and banal actions, she invites others, bit-by-bit collectively reorganizing the stage. Being all cute and kind, she starts to overwrite the Modern Architect's dominating voice.*

*She is still exploring, becoming and grounding her words, yet she is there and she does not stand alone. She cherishes the delight found in the tactical and visual results she and her community have achieved. She warmly values the simplicity of the everyday lived experiences she derives from her rather improvised actions on the scene. She finds her way through the chaos and unpredictability of the continuously changing and unfolding setting. And as she herself regularly struggles in this messy context, she keeps her eyes open for unexpected interventions. Mutual understanding and tolerance are what keep her from falling. Keeping sight on the bigger picture and the longing to perform her political statements are what keep her going. And so, while she increasingly urns her place in the spotlight, she changes the current state of affairs of the theater in itself.*

*Welcoming to the “altering”<sup>2</sup> uAD scene of the “Commons Architect.e”.*

---

1 I have contextualized the doctoral research and design practice within the field of “urban architectural design”. Being closely related to urbanism, yet still labeled within the architectural discipline the uAD scene relates to my architectural upbringing at Sint-Lucas, the Faculty of Architecture of the KU Leuven. I have obtained my Master of Science in Architecture within the trajectory of Urban Architectural Design (KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2012). This trajectory is based on four pillars: (1) an urban architecture that is a social and critical architecture with a pervasive impact on the urban community, (2) the architect as go-between, making a spatial interpretation of social issues, (3) the site –and not the program– is the regulatory idea of the project, it implies a research by design of architectural possibilities, and (4) a multitude of perspectives in which the student works on all possible scales and within different disciplines.

2 The notion of the “altering” will be explained in the following paragraph. A definition is also provided in the glossary.

## 00.02.01 Aims and scope

This book provides a written account of my doctoral research and design practice. This work is an articulation of the insights obtained in my exploratory research. As **central research question**, I have explored how I -as architect, researcher and urban activist-, can from my specific set of skills- support communities in their search to take a commons-oriented direction in the urban architectural design of our city, Brussels?

**Three subquestions** are defined:

- ° What are the frictions at play around Josaphat, as symbolic and symptomatic ground of Brussels uAD?
- ° How can the promising principles of the (urban) commons be implemented in the uAD practice? What kind of practice emerges out of it and how does it approach the making of the city?
- ° What are the opportunities evolving around Josaphat and how can the altering practice that emerges on its ground be positioned within a broader movement?

This exploration entails the becoming of an “altering” urban architectural design practice. The concept of altering refers to a by Doina Petrescu edited book on “*Altering practices*”, approaching “otherness” –with a relation to gender- more as a verb, the concept of altering stresses the becoming of this alterity. Approaching difference as a positive quality, “*altering practices are ‘becomings’; they are ‘active, dynamic processes of thinking and transformation’*” (Petrescu, 2007, p. 3).

In the accurate wording of my examination committee, this thesis explores an altering uAD practice that “*looks into the potential of an everyday architecture practice, as a practice of urban commoning, for the development of resilient and integrated urban places / neighborhoods (with in the long run better urban futures).*”

This doctoral research and design practice has **three key results** as outcome. The first result is a criticism towards the current state of affairs of uAD in Brussels, grounded in the experience on and around Josaphat. Approaching Josaphat as both a symbolic and symptomatic ground, several matters of concern are addressed. The second result is an altering uAD practice that explores the potential of urban commons on the field. This entails the exploration of the principles of the commons in the practice through a making in the everyday and resulted into a range of strategies, characteristics, tools and methods for an altering practice. As third element, the doctorate aims to contribute through a positioning of the altering uAD practice within the broader movement of participatory design and Brussels’ uAD scene.

The **aim** of these is to contribute to the field of urban architectural design through a performative and speculative exploration –in research and in practice- of an altering practice that radically orients at quality of life and democratization. The doctoral research and design practice situated around the Josaphat site in Brussels has impacted in

the “real world” through the imaging, scouting, constructing and caretaking of commoning practices. In addition this written account and the visual resources that complement it, it aims to contribute to the debate and alter the contemporary urban architectural design scene through a written reflection. In this process, strategic concepts and personas build a vocabulary that makes the obtained knowledge explicit. These concepts and personas emerge from the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing, relates them to theoretical discussions while they aim to –as active agents- inform and foster an altering urban architectural design practice.

The doctoral research and design practice with its three key results and its underlying aims, has found expression in different **forms of output**. There is (1) the book, (2) an Instagram account, (3) a website, (4) an exhibition that will be hosted at PerspectiveLab, and (5) the impact on and around Josaphat.

Apart from the physical urban architectural design interventions, the doctoral research and design practice has also contributed to the creation of social dynamics, commoning practices, political statements, strategic urban activism and an everyday experience. In addition, insights on the doctoral research and design practice articulated in this book provide a written account of the work. In this written part there is both a space for a linear in-depth discussion and a more poetic reportage of the lived experiences.

In addition to the written account and the impact on Josaphat, visual resources make up a share of the output. Moreover, this doctorate aims to reach out to different publics by engaging **different “languages”**. The multiplicity of the output is supported by a range of concepts that flirt with theory, as they give consistency to the practice. This illustrates the designing, composing, weaving, sketching of this doctorate. It aligns with the architectural -dissociative- attitude that provides the base of the altering urban architectural design practice. The output reveals parts of the story in an explicit, visual, poetic, accessible and/or intuitive way. Moreover, the different languages that are used reveal the overlap and blending of different fields at which this doctoral research and design practice is situated. This doctorate has called for transdisciplinary creativity. It evolved through co-creative partnerships with fellow commoners that come from very diverse intellectual, professional and civic backgrounds. Moreover, the design practice and academic research combined the architectural field with the social and artistic ones and reached out at critical theory. It is at this complex intersection the doctoral research and design practice needs to be situated.



## 00.02.02 Reader's guide

In the previous section I have introduced the aims and scopes of the doctoral research and design practice. Hereby I have introduced the different output in which the doctoral work has resulted into. This reader's guide aims to support the reader to find his/her way throughout this multitude of output.

The output comes in different forms, both visual and written. All results of the doctoral research and design practice is put together in scheme d in the following section. **Five forms of output** are provided of which some entail multiple contents. There is (1) the book, (2) an Instagram account, (3) a website, (4) an exhibition that will be hosted at PerspectiveLab, and (5) the impact on and around Josaphat.

Within these five forms of output, **different contents** are provided:

First, there is the book that consists of a page-to-page discussion of the doctoral research and design practice. This foundational written output (00) provides a linear discussion that playfully relates to the conventional academic structure of a doctoral thesis. This clearly structured part can, within the book, be recognized as it is printed on white paper. The glossary, however, is printed on colored paper to emphasize the agency of the concepts that are created throughout this discussion.

In addition the book also consists of more poetic writing that reconstructs lived experiences (REC). These fragments narrate the lived experiences that reveal specific moments that were highly insightful within the doctoral research and design practice. These parts are printed on recycled paper and provide a more engaging reading that is aimed to disrupt the more structured narrative. For this the RECs are placed consciously in relation to the nearby content that is discussed in the 00 part of the book.

As final element of the book, there are mappings (MAP). These schematize the physical location of the Josaphat site and its interventions, provide a timeframe in which to position the doctoral research and design practice, offer a summary of the processual development of the practice and provide an actor map.

The second form of output is an Instagram account. Through this medium a chronological reconstruction of the main events and actions of the design-based participatory action research is visualized. This timeline (TL) thrives in the rich amount of visual data that is gathered throughout the doctoral research and design practice. Stressing the processual nature of the urban architectural design practice, it consists of a selection of around hundred moments that took place on and around Josaphat during the last four years.

Each action or event that has been selected for the timeline is represented through a square-shaped photo and a brief reflective text. Using the language of social media the reflection starts with a couple of questions that reveal a specific challenge, provides

a brief description of the action or event and lists several techniques that were implemented. Through these listed techniques the timeline provides a combined visual and explicitly written report of the design-based participatory action research and the mechanisms of the underlying architectural practice. Moreover these listed techniques provide the base for the discussion in chapter 00.08 of the foundational reflection (00).

As a third form, there is a website is designed to provide a portfolio (P) as its main content. Being the website of the Josaph'Aire nonprofit that has been found in relation to this doctoral research and design practice, the portfolio aims to clearly and accessibly present the main interventions that have been realized. Through images and text this portfolio aims to provide a comprehensive introduction to the commons-oriented initiatives that are present on Josaphat. Using the medium of a publicly accessible website, the portfolio aims at a large scale and popular dissemination of the design practice. Furthermore the ambition is to also support and empower the diverse communities behind these commons-oriented interventions by providing them a stage to show their work.

The fourth form is the exhibition that complimentary to the public defense aims to be a visualization of the altering architectural attitude that underlies this doctoral research and design practice. Through an exhibition (EXPO) in collaboration with fellow commoner and photographer Toha De Brant, the exploratory, intuitive, influential and improvised nature of the practice will be highlighted. In this expo, Toha's by-hand-processed photos will be displayed in relation to my architectural drawings .

The fifth and final output provides the real life impact of the doctorate. This entails physical interventions in space, but also a contribution to the creation of social dynamics, political statements, commoning practices, et cetera. All of these have taken place around Josaphat as a "living lab at large" (LL), a concept that I will describe in chapter 00.03 of this book.

All together these five forms of output with their manifold content (00, REC, MAP, TL, P, EXPO, LL) provide **a combination of a written account and visual resources**. This is inspired by the dissertation of Lina Bo Bardi. In her "*Propaedeutic contribution*" Bo Bardi (1957) discussed her research considering the nature of architectural theory and her ambition to aid the realization of a new kind of practice (Veikos, 2013). Cathrine Veikos -in her analysis of Bo Bardi's thesis- discusses the design of its layout. In addition to a written discussion, the thesis also consists of a "visual narrative" that entails a montage of images and references. Veikos addresses this visual narrative that provides alternative arguments as they offer a non-linear –sometimes confusing- reading, refusing to make one central point. The "visual narrative provokes new and multiple understandings of the text" (Veikos, 2013, p. 21). As Bo Bardi criticized modern architecture for its tendency to separate the world in "things" and "thoughts", she, in the conceptual design of her thesis, makes the point to bring these together (Veikos, 2013). Inspired by Bo Bardi's combined written and visual forms of dissemination, I have sought to bring together the things and thoughts of this doctoral research and design practice in a simi-

lar entwined mix of written and visual output.

Hereby I want to acknowledge that I cannot represent the whole richness that I feel is simmering around Josaphat's ground. The Josaphat site and the many dynamics that are at play around its urban architectural design –including this doctorate- also entail a lived place. Josaphat makes up a part of the everyday environment of many people, also those that do not engage in urban activism. There is Josaphat's being today, but it also bears a tomorrow that is loaded with ambitious proposals. Grounded on Josaphat's intriguing and still significantly mysterious being, the output of this dissertation is but a situated account of broader and more complex meanings that make up its air.

The reader is invited to take up an active role and compose, affirm, question and imagine his/her own way to dive into this multitude of output. I aim for any reader –my examination committee, academic peers, fellow commoners, architecture students, urban designers, professionals from other disciplines, Brussels citizens,...- to build up their own understanding of the architectural agency that evolves around the Josaphat site in Brussels. Equally I hope the reader finds inspiration and pleasure in going through the written account and visual resources that I provide as output of the doctoral research and design practice.

## 00. Foundational discussion

As a part of this book the 00 part –printed on white paper- builds up the page-to-page reflection of this doctoral research and design practice. Through this linear discussion this output aims to build the foundational arguments and conclusions obtained through the design-based participatory action research evolving around the Josaphat site in Brussels

Chapter 00.01 *“How do you imagine to change our future city?”* consists of the abstract and provides a summarized account of the doctorate through a poetic and explicit articulation.

Chapter 00.00 *“Merci !”* aims to express my gratitude to all those wonderful people and organizations that have supported me in this doctoral adventure. I here want to recognize the many financial, structural, solidarity and personal forms of support I have received.

In this chapter 00.02 *“Welcoming to the altering scene”* I provide an introduction to the doctorate and reveal (00.02.01) its main aims and scope, (00.02.02) provide a reader's guide and (00.02.03) display the mappings (MAP) that schematize the physical interventions at Josaphat, provide a timeframe for the design-based participatory action research, et cetera.

In 00.03 *“Feet on the ground”* I discuss the methodological framework of this doctorate. I describe “Josaphat's ground” (00.03.01) through its current being, its planned future and its state of affairs. After which I discuss its position as what I will conceptual-

ize to be “a living lab at large” (00.03.02). In addition, I discuss the conducted method of design-based participatory action research (00.03.03) and reveal my agency as architect-researcher, architect-writer and one of the commoners as I position the output of the thesis within its here and now (00.03.04).

Subsequently in chapter 00.04 “*House-garden-and-kitchen stories*” I describe key projects of the doctoral design practice. I first introduce a contextualization of these design interventions by defining them as “urban commons” (00.04.01). Hereafter I describe four key projects through a framework of imagining, scouting, constructing and caring phases. There is “Recup’Kitchen” (00.04.02), a mobile kitchen that uses recuperated food leftovers to bring people together around the table in public space. The garden is represented by “Jardin Latinis” (00.04.03) that more than just a nomadic garden, aims to build social cohesion and reconnect people to nature. The “Maison des Possibles” (00.04.03) has the archetypical form of a house that shelters community-oriented initiatives at Josaphat. As a building block of the desired future city, its construction explores the re-use of materials, low-tech tools and a non-monetary economy. As final project there is the “Josaph’Aire” nonprofit (00.04.05) that as an invisible urban architectural design intervention supports those civic initiatives that use Josaphat –and other places– as a zone of urban experimentation.

00.05 “*A field of tension*” discusses the main matters of concern that are at play on and around Josaphat’s ground. Josaphat here is discussed as a happening place (00.05.01) that is both symbolic and symptomatic of how urban architectural design takes place in the Brussels Capital Region. Some of the frictions that occur around Josaphat’s planning are contextualized in Brussels’ struggle with destructive profit-driven urban development known as “Brusselization”. Arguing something is wrong (00.05.02), I introduce the existing persona of “Economic Man”, from whom I mold an architectural alter ego; “Modern Architect”. In the concluding discussion of this chapter, I use Modern Architect to reveal the matters of concern at stake (00.05.03).

Building on to these arguments, chapter 00.06 “*A turning point?!?*” aims to contextualize the doctoral research and design practice. I first acknowledge that my “(be)longing” –being the search for a better quality of life and democratization through urban architectural design– in itself is nothing new. (00.06.01). After which I introduce the persona of “Participation Architect”. As a caricature of the anti-movement that aimed to fight off Modern Architect in the sixties and seventies, I have a critical look at Participation Architect’s position today (00.06.02). Seeing things are in motion today, I discuss it is time to think beyond Participation Architect and look for a contemporary “altering” model (00.06.03).

The persona of “*Commons Architect.e*” is subsequently introduced in chapter 00.07. I describe the patterns of the commons urban architectural design practice as it emerged on Josaphat’s ground. I identify the what (00.07.01), how (00.07.02), and where and when (00.07.03) of this practice. In addition, I list the main attributes of the Commons Architect.e (00.07.04). In the concluding discussion of this chapter (00.07.05), I present

the Commons Architect.e –Arch.e for the friends- as a commons-oriented alternative.

In addition, chapter 00.08 discusses the emergent mechanisms at play in “*The becoming of the Arch.e*”. I first analyze the development of the Arch.e through ten “act’s” or phases (00.08.01) that have been defining her role within the broader process. Linked to these ten acts, I discuss ten of her coping techniques (00.08.02), while I subsequently provide ten guidelines (00.08.03) that would allow space for the Arch.e to gain ground in Brussels and beyond. As conclusion I discuss how the being and becoming of the Arch.e embody a critical spatial practice that could support a crucial turning point for uAD.

I conclude the foundational discussion in chapter 00.09 “*(be)longing*” by discussing the future frameworks for this doctoral research and design practice.

As a complimentary contribution, 00.10 “*Food for thought*” provides the content of several publications that resulted from this doctoral research and design practice. Out of ecological reasons this part is not included in the printed version of the book.

In chapter 00.11 a bibliography of the used references can be found as well as a list of figures and abbreviations. The glossary that explains the key concepts of this written account is also to be found in this final chapter.

## REC. Reconstructions of lived experiences

Within the book, the 00 foundational reflection is complimented by poetic descriptions and reflections on lived experiences. Printed on recycled paper, these parts are intertwined with the 00 writing and aim to provide a complimentary, exploratory, yet also differentiating written account that playfully disrupts the linear discussion. The positioning of these RECs within the book is consciously chosen to relate specific lived moments to certain parts of the discussion.

These RECs aim to take the reader into the messy, fun, political, convivial and challenging atmosphere of the practice of the Commons Architect.e.

## MAP. Mappings of the altering uAD practice

Section 00.02.03 of this introductory chapter provides five mappings that aim to visually support the reader. These mappings schematize:

- (a) the physical location of Josaphat within the Brussels Capital Region and the constellation of the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions (through plans and a drawing).
- (b) a timeframe of the doctoral research and design practice that describes the main steps in the official planning process and main happenings within the urban activism evolving around Josaphat. In addition, an overlay on transparent paper adds a time-

frame of the design-based participatory action research. This layer maps all the main events and actions that are reconstructed in the timeline (TL), relates these to the overall development of the urban activism and connects them to the ten act's of becoming of the Commons Architect.e as discussed in chapter 00.08. In addition to these ten act's, this timeframe lists some of the most significant techniques employed throughout each act.

- (c) a summary of the becoming of the Commons Arch.e. In this mapping ten photos of the house-garden-and-kitchen practice connect to the ten act's of the Arch.e's becoming, of which for each act, one of the implemented coping techniques is briefly discussed.

- (d) a scheme of the different forms of output and the main results of the doctorate.

- (e) an actor map, which reveals the different civic collectives active on and around Josaphat. The actor map aims to reveal certain visions / attitudes and links these to the persona's I describe in the foundational reflection (00) of this doctorate.

## TL. Timeline reconstructing the main events and actions

The chronological listing of the main actions and events of the design-based participatory action research are disseminated through an Instagram account that can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.instagram.com/josaphaire/>

Each event or action is visualized through a square-shaped picture and is accompanied by a brief description (see 00.02.fig.1). The written part starts with a couple of questions that describe a specific challenge, briefly discusses the situation and then lists some of the implemented techniques that aim to reveal a concrete method to tackle the specific challenge.

At this stage, the timeline has captured around a hundred moments which is still added on to as the use of the Instagram extends beyond the "here and now" of this doctorate that I –in section 00.03.04- freeze at June 2018. The use of social media aims to make this output more accessible to a popular public, allows to talk more directly to fellow commoning agents, connects to the website portfolio and mainly permits to continue this visual reflection process beyond the timeframe of this doctorate.

Naming the account "Josaphaire" in relation to the Josaph'Aire nonprofit, furthermore aims to allow other actors that embody the agency of the Commons Architect.e to continue this research aspect of the design practice.

Being aware the medium of Instagram is heavily hijacked by Economic Man and his extractive tendencies, I, through this tool, aspire to empower the commons urban architectural design practice –beyond my personal agency.

## P. Portfolio of the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions

Through the medium of a website I aim to build a portfolio that presents the Maison des Possibles (house), Jardin Latinis (garden), Recup'Kitchen (kitchen) and Josaph'Aire (underlying commoning). Like the timeline is disseminated through Instagram, also the website takes advantage of the Josaph'Aire naming; this with the ambition to further intertwine research and practice.

The portfolio can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.josaphaire.be/>

Through the website, I aim to provide a clear and communicable representation of the work of the Commons Architect.e and the commoning community she is part of. This output aims to foster the visibility and performative existence of this agency.

## EXPO. Exhibition on the agency of the Commons Architect.e

The exhibition will be set up complimentary to the final oral presentation of the doctorate. The aim is to highlight the agency of the commoners and more particularly the attitude of the Commons Architect.e. This will be achieved through the media of photography and imaginations. These will –explicitly or more subtly- be complimented by the adjectives and quotes from the RECs in chapter 00.07 that discuss the architectural agency.

A collaboration is set up with Toha De Brant who works for BRAL, had been a colleague researcher for the Brussels living lab as part of the “Incubators of Public Spaces” JPI urban Europe research project, is an anthropologist, photographer, member of Josaph'Aire and fellow Commons Architect.e.

We imagine this exhibition to take place at PerspectiveLab, which is a meeting space hosted by Perspective; the Brussels Capital Region's planning administration that amongst others is also responsible for the planning process of Josaphat. PerspectiveLab is described as a think tank that is aimed to organize debate, experimentation, prospecting and action considering the big urban challenges Perspective is working on.

Aiming to move away from a top-down and bottom-up dichotomy, the exhibition –and with that the public defense of the dissertation- would manifest Josaphat's commons agency at this formal venue of the Region's main planning administration. The open glass façade of PerspectiveLab would be our platform from which to breath out the atmosphere of Josaphat's air.

The analogue photos by Toha (see EXPO.fig.1 and EXPO.fig.2 for a sample) are personally processed by hand from development to print. We imagine to expose a selection of these photos together with some of the drawings and imaginations realized within the doctoral research and design practice.

Overall this exhibition aims to further build on to the research and practice considering an altering attitude in urban architectural design. Through this more visual and



00.02.fig.1 - Fragment of the Instagram timeline (TL).





EXPO.fig.1 – Spatial Mirror, Azin. – reminiscent.  
Photo by Toha De Brant.



EXPO.fig.2 – “Acteurs des biens communs”. Photo by Toha De Brant.

artistic medium it is the ambition to further advance the awareness on this altering attitude that in the doctorate is embodied through the persona of the Commons Architect.e.

Through this exhibition Toha and I aim to visualize the stratification and entanglement of the roles / approaches / attitudes we and our fellow commoners take up. By doing so we bring the on-site practice and off-site reflection in dialogue within the setting of PerspectiveLab.

The curation and organization of this exhibition is currently (December 2018) being further developed and planned.

## LL. Josaphat as a living lab at large

As the last output there is the real world experience and atmosphere of Josaphat. This doctorate cannot but grasp and articulate a part of the many rich dynamics that are floating in Josaphat's air.

I welcome the reader to come and have a personal taste of the everyday and political atmosphere that is hovering over Josaphat's ground. No better way to understand and live the continuously unfolding agency of the Commons Architect.e than to be an active part of her shared commoning practice.

Information to access the by Josaph'Aire occupied part of the Josaphat site can be found on the -portfolio- website. There, also a calendar of planned activities can be found: [http://www.josaphaire.be/?page\\_id=345](http://www.josaphaire.be/?page_id=345)

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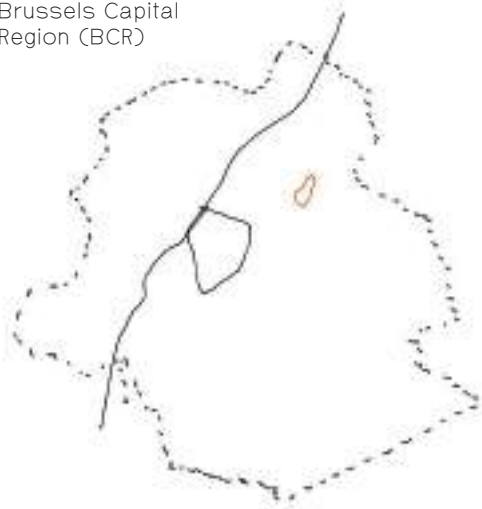


# 00.02.04 Mappings

## a. Mapping of Josaphat

This scheme situates the physical location of Josaphat within the Brussels Capital Region and the constellation of the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions (through plans and drawings).

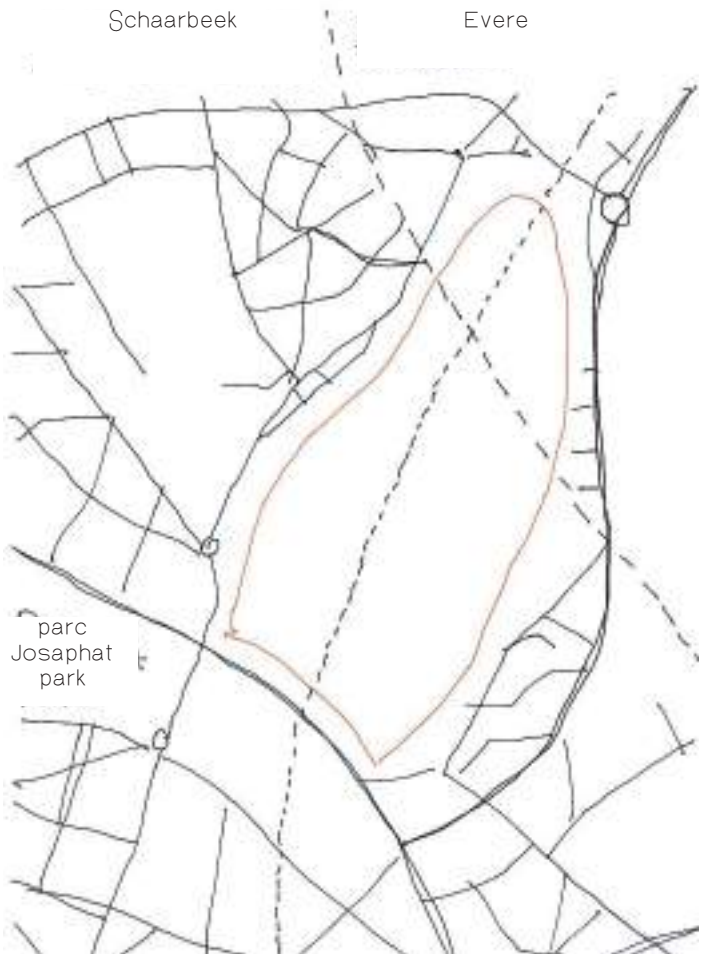
Brussels Capital Region (BCR)

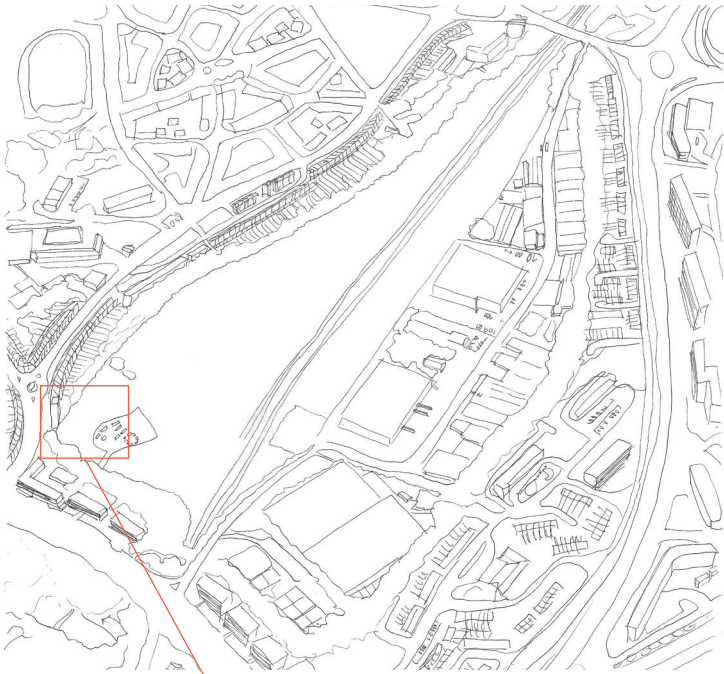


Josaphat

Schaarbeek

Evere





The self-proclaimed transitional use of Josaphat's south west corner.



Potamoes

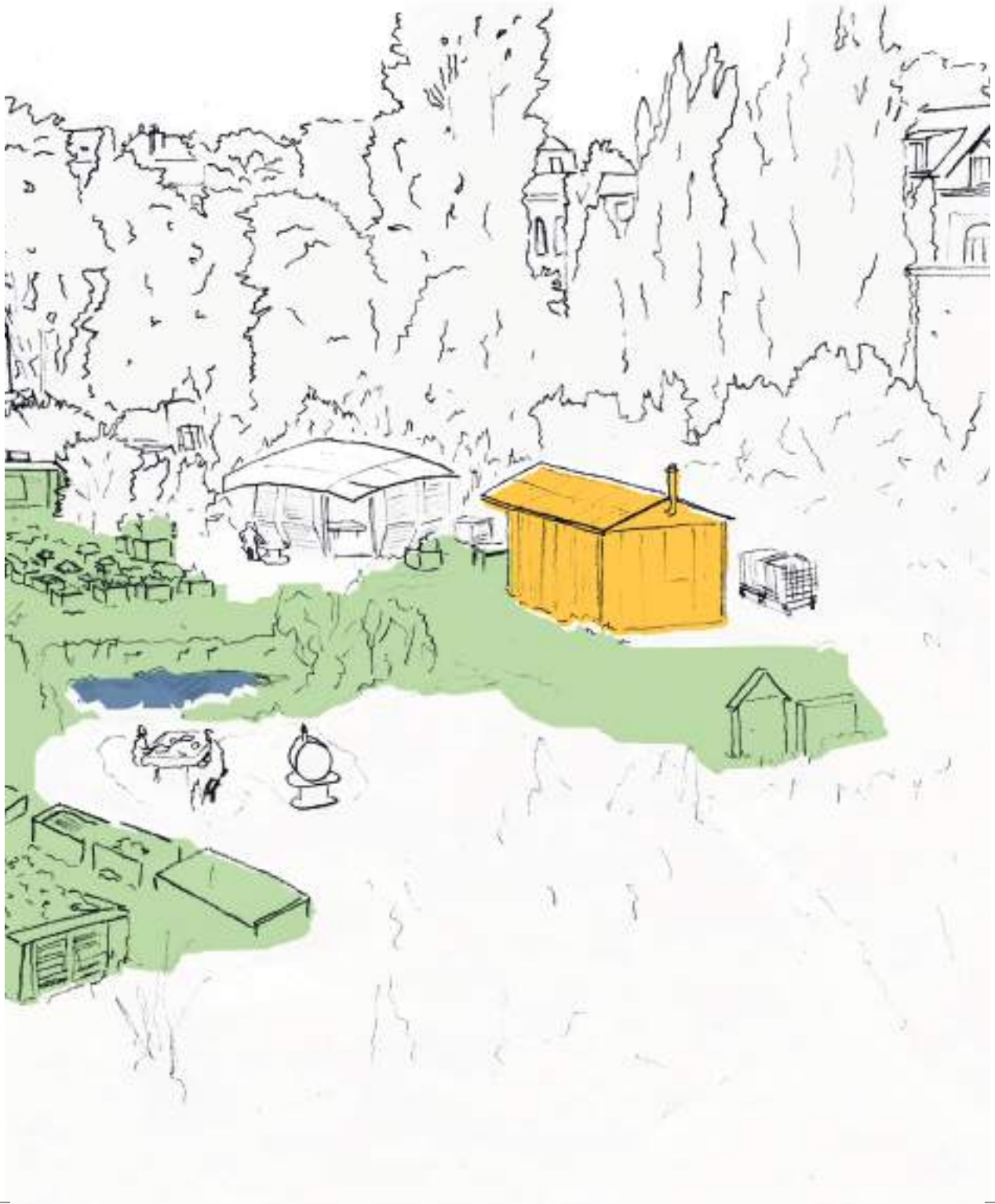
Recup'Kitchen



Forum

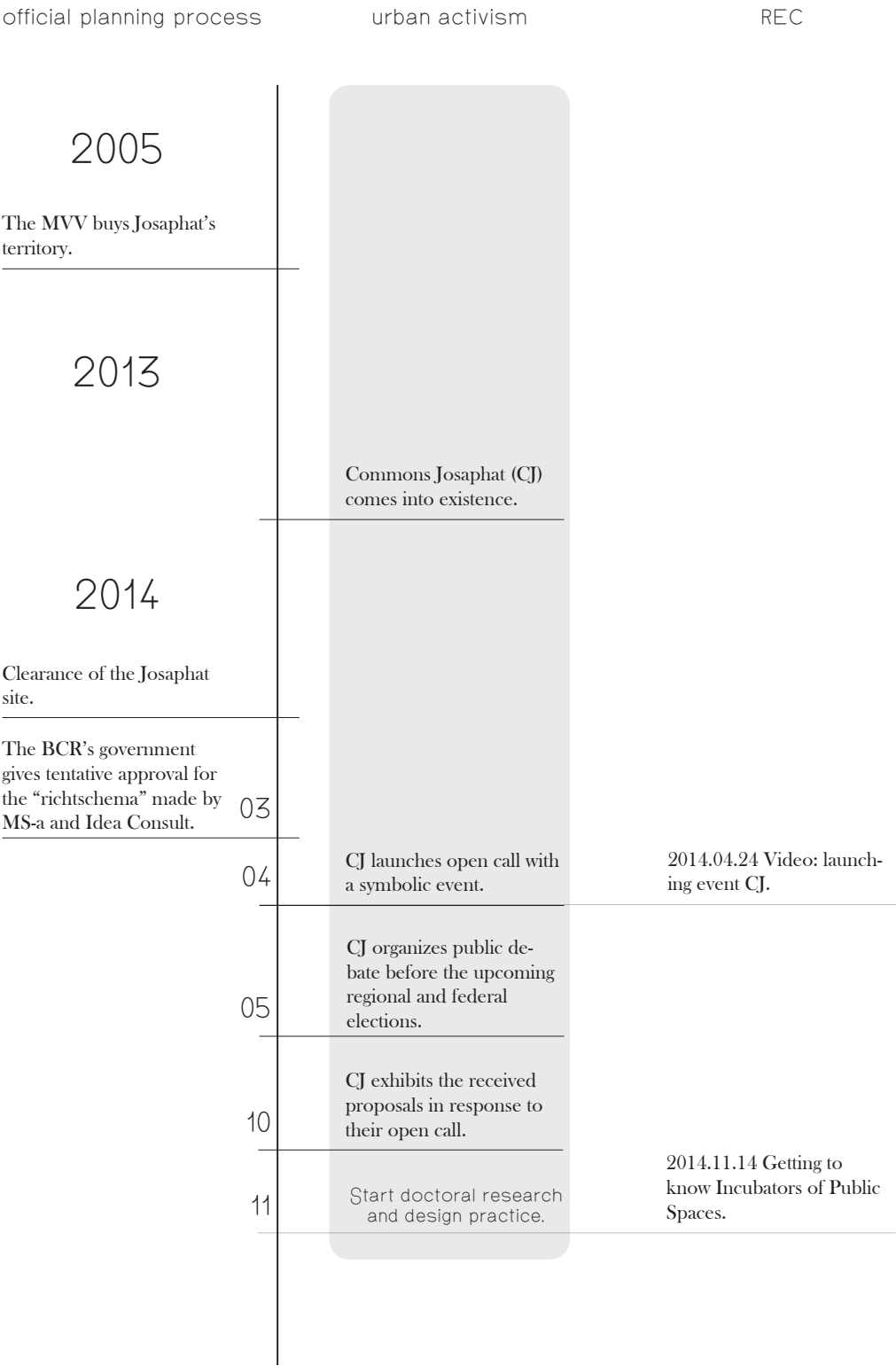
Maison des Possibles

Jardin Navez



b. Timeframe

This scheme visualizes the timeframe of the doctoral research and design practice. It describes the main steps in the official planning process and main happenings within the urban activism evolving around Josaphat.



official planning process

urban activism

REC

2015

	01	Participation in the We-Traders exhibition.	2015.01.17 First visit at Josaphat.
	03	Initiation of the Jardin Latinis (JL).	2015.03.04 Imagine: One plant box on its way to Josaphat.
		CJ organizes debate marathon as part of We-Traders.	2015.03.17 First true visit at Josaphat.
	04	Organization of the first Picnic the commons event.	2015.03.26 Debate marathon at Bozar.
JL (represented by Dewey) and the MVV sign a convention for temporary use.	08		2015.05.31 Imagine: A recipe for bxl Good Food 2020.
The MVV becomes the MSI.			2015.06.14 Scout: So how to build a shelter?
The planned official call for temporary use is postponed.	09	CJ publicly present their proposal for "Josaphat en bien commun".	
	11	Recup'Kitchen (RK) launches its crowdfunding campaign.	2015.11.01 Scout: Preparing the crowdfunding campaign.
The MSI organizes a public information session for the neighbors of Josaphat.	12	CJ organizes an atelier "occup'action" during its general assembly.	2015.12.03 A framework for transitory use.

2016

Environmental impact study by Dries Consultants.			
Urban landscape study by Bureau Bas Smets.			
	01	The convention for temporary use between the MSI and Dewey (JL) expires and is not prolonged.	2016.01.31 Construct: Digging the lake.



official planning process

urban activism

REC

CJ meets with the MSI and the Cabinet of the BCR's minister-president to present their proposal.	02	RK successfully closes its crowdfunding campaign.	
	03		
Both the MSI and CJ present their vision for Josaphat at the BXL Academy.		CJ meets the mayor and alderman of urbanism and participation of Evere.	
		RK installs its roulotte at Josaphat.	2016.03.30 Construct: Getting ready to open.
	04	CJ meets the cabinet of the mayor of Schaarbeek.	
	05	CJ applies for a subsidy for the "Huis van de Commons" (MdP).	2016.05.23 Imagine: Huis van de Commons.
	06	Kick-off of the "wasteland FESTIVAL de la friche".	2016.07.17 Care: Cleaning the dishes.
	08	The construction of Make-It has initiated (MdP).	
	09	Make-It and the Huis van de Commons merge into the Maisons des Possibles.	2016.09.19 Dialoguing over participatory architecture.
		CJ receives subsidy for the Huis van de Commons.	2016.09.19 Colab brainstorm.
CJ present their 3 running trajectories to the MSI: ilot modèle, santé and occup'action.	10	Organization of a "chantier ouvert" for the MdP & expo by Paula Bouffieux.	
The BCR's government approves the plans (RPA) for Josaphat.	12		2016.12.22 Imagine: Writing the bylaws.
2017			
	01		2017.01.09 Proposing Commons in My Back-Yard // CIMBY.
MSI expresses the interest to collaborate with CJ for the CIMBY research.	02	CJ submits the CIMBY research project proposal.	

official planning process

urban activism

REC

	03	CJ presents its proposal to the Brussels Chief architect.	
	04	The Josaph'Aire (JA) non-profit is founded.	2017.04.17 Presentation CA²RE conference Ghent: I / we.
		CJ organizes a "marche exploratoire" for their santé trajectory.	2017.05.17 Scout: Hunting for a building permit.
			2017.05.21 Scout: Setting out a parliament?
	05		2017.05.26 Mail conversation with Ana Krec on CGT (DGT).
	06	JA organizes the "jour Josaph'Aire dag".	2017.06.10 Jour Josaph'Aire dag.
		JA requests a building permit for the MdP.	
	07	The construction of the Forum has started.	
		JA obtains an exemption for a building permit for 3 months. The construction of the MdP restarts.	
The MSI and JA meet.	08		
	09	Incubators jury makes a selection of the crowd-funded ideas.	2017.09.05 Incubators jury.
		The Comité de site Josaphat (Comité) organizes a visit at the occasion of car free Sunday.	2017.09.17 Care free Sunday at Josaphat.
			2017.10.25 European Commons Assembly, Right to the City workshop.
	10		
	11	The MdP obtains its building permit.	2017.11.22 Care: Extending the lake.
		The Incubators organizes a closing expo and debate.	
The MSI launches the competitive dialogue for the first development phase.	12	The Forum takes distance from JA.	2017.12.15 Construct: A temporary solution for a temporary structure.
The MSI and JA meet.			



official planning process

urban activism

REC

2018

The MSI sends a proposal for a convention.

01

JA organizes the first Jour des communs.

2018.01.14 Construct: A day for the commons / Jour des communs.

JA makes the proposal for FAIRE in dialogue with the MSI.

2018.01.26 Talking about my/our approach; valuing what is in the everyday.

03

2018.03.02 Care: Lighting the stove.

04

JA proposes an alternative convention to the MSI.

The planned meeting between the MSI and JA is canceled.

The MSI summons the board of JA for a meeting.

05

2018.05.20 Josaphat under negotiation.

The MSI and Perspective organize a public presentation of Josaphat's RPA.

06

2018.06.16 Tea talk over Recup'Kitchen; it is not in the cooking.

The MSI and JA meet to discuss the convention.

2018.06.19 Care: At the negotiation table.

2018.07.13 Notebook reflection: it is not a fairy tale.



### c. Scheme of the Arch.e's becoming

This scheme provides a summary of the becoming of the Commons Arch.e. In this mapping ten photos of the house-garden-and-kitchen practice connect to the ten act's (phases) of the Arch.e's becoming, which are discussed in chapter 00.08. Each act is represented by a roman number and a brief title, while the text below provides a short description of a coping technique that provides a concrete method to act on a specific challenge that occurred in this specific phase of the becoming of the Arch.e.

In addition a list of ten guidelines is added, these propose fundamental and / or concrete methods / strategies / approaches that would support the altering architectural attitude represented by the Commons Architect.e. The implementation of (one of) these guidelines could nudge a turning point in Brussels' urbanism to orient towards a stronger (be)longing.



#### Commons Architect.e

The Arch.e stands as an un-heroic model for an altering -commons-oriented- attitude. Her (be)longing pushes her to foster quality of life and democratization in urban architectural design through a caring, constructive, pragmatic and revolting approach.

The art of becoming an Arch.e:

## **0** - Observe & absorb

Get in touch by walking. Walking is a form observation that allows to break open a preconceived reading of an urban space.



## **II** - Make it happen

Once a solid concept for a project is on the table, look to make it happen by asking for help. It opens up for participation and might actually get you going.



## **III** - Construct

If you found the necessary help to make your project happen, look to realize it fast. The physical result of these quick wins can have an empowering impact.



## **V** - Take distance

It is inevitable to distance at a certain point. Keep investing in the everyday life and openness of your activities by publicly inviting people for open construction site events.



## **I** - Act on the vision

Wherever how small, look for how to perform it in the physical space. Make your small act and look to communicate loudly about it.

## **IV** - Take care & repeat

Best way to make your projects live is by having different dynamics cross around it. Literally bring the debate to the kitchen and garden.

11.2014

02.2015

08.2015

01.2016

03.2016

09.2016

## VI - Get into politics

Intervening in public space, calling for a more commons-oriented direction... It is political. Be prepared to take the necessary institutionalization steps and get structuralized.



## VIII - Push through

Once the direction is recovered, push things through. Commoning sometimes requires to close the legs in order to stand stronger and "bite" more strongly.



## VII - Struggle

Things can get very challenging, the best way to sustain is to make sure that taking care is taken seriously. Organize events to celebrate collective maintenance.

## IX - Protect & revive

Never stop imaging. Keep your eyes at the horizon and look for future opportunities. Take up your responsibilities and invest in the convivial strength of everyday innovation.

## Ten guidelines to give her space

These ten guidelines offer a mix of concrete tools and methods with more general proposal for how the altering architectural attitude represented by the Commons Architect.e can be fostered. Some guidelines address fundamental issues and as such might not be easy to advance, while others propose more concrete instruments and approaches that can be implemented rather quickly. However, each of them require more thorough research in order to be able to implement them to their full potential.

The well thought and executed implementation of one -preferably several- of these guidelines could mark a critical turning point in Brussels' urbanism in favor of quality of life and democratization in urban architectural design.



1. Strong vision and strategy through co-creation



2. The necessity of transitional use for urban innovation



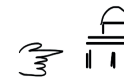
3. Think beyond the price in public tenders



4. Permis de faire



5. Contract-based instrument for public-civic collaboration



6. Poking in the existing governance



7. In-house agents pushing civic participation



8. Micro financing



9. Transparency in planning processes



10. Work at a human scale / grain

02.2017

09.2017

04.2018

06.2018

d. Scheme of the different forms of output and the main results of the doctorate

OUTPUT

- 00.01 How do you imagine to change our future city? // abstract
- 00.00 Merci ! // acknowledgments
- 00.02 Welcome to the altering scene // introduction
- 00.03 Feet on the ground // methodological framework
- 00.04 House-garden-and-kitchen stories // design practice
- 00.05 A field of tension // matters of concern
- 00.06 A turning point? // contextualization
- 00.07 Commons Architect.e //emergent themes
- 00.08 The becoming of the Arch.e // emergent mechanisms
- 00.09 (be)longing // future frameworks
- 00.10 Food for thought // publications
- 00.11 References

WRITTEN ACCOUNT

VISUAL RESOURCES

BOOK

- 00 Foundational reflection of the doctoral thesis
- REC Reconstructions of lived experiences
- MAP
  - Mapping of Josaphat
  - Timeframe of the Commons Architect.e
  - Outline of the becoming of the Arch.e
  - Scheme of the output and results
  - Actor map

INSTAGRAM

- TL Timeline of the main actions and events

WEBSITE

- p Portfolio of the house-garden-and-kitchen practice

EXPO AT PERSPECTIVELAB

- EXPO Photographic exhibition on the Commons Architect.e

INTERVENTIONS

- LL Impact on the Josaphat ground as living lab at large.



# RESULTS

- 00 This part provides a linear discussion that playfully relates to the conventional academic structure of a doctoral thesis and aims to take the reader from page to page.
- REC These reconstructions of the lived experiences of the Commons Architect.e provide narrations of specific moments relevant to the doctoral research and design practice.
- MAP As support to the linear discussion and RECs, several schemes aim to visualize (1) the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions on Josaphat, (2) a timeframe of the official planning process and urban activism concerning Josaphat with an additional layer that links this timeframe to (3) the becoming of the Commons Arch.e, (4) a scheme that brings together the main output and results of the doctorate, and (5) a map of the main actors and their networks.
- TL This timeline provides a chronological reconstruction of the main actions and events of the design-based participatory action research. For each moment a photo is accompanied by a couple of questions, a brief description of the situation and the action / event, and a listing of several implemented techniques.
- P Through the website of the Josaph'Aire nonprofit a portfolio is provided of the house-garden-and-kitchen projects and their related communities. Through images and text this portfolio aims to provide an accessible introduction to the commons-oriented initiatives evolving around Josaphat's ground.
- EX. In addition to the public defense, a photography exhibition is planned. Hosted at PerspectiveLab the exhibited photos are aimed to reveal the attitude and (be)longing of the persona of the Commons Architect.e.
- LL The doctoral research and design practice had a real life impact through the interventions that were realized as part of the design-based action research.

ECONOMIC  
MAN  
MODERN  
ARCHITECT

COMMONS  
ARCHITECT.E

PARTICIPATION  
ARCHITECT

(be)longing

design-based  
participatory action research

AIR  
GROUND

The doctoral research and design practice envisages **three key results:**

° a criticism towards the current state of affairs of uAD in Brussels, grounded in the experience on and around Josaphat. The personas of Economic Man and Modern Architect address several matters of concern at stake.

° an altering uAD practice that explores the potential of urban commons on the field. Specific patterns and adjectives define the being of the Arch.e, while acts and techniques discuss her process of becoming.

° a positioning of the altering uAD practice within the broader movement of participatory design and Brussels' uAD scene. As part of a broader movement, the Commons Architect.e strives for a hypothetical turning point in Brussels' uAD.



e. Actor map

This scheme reveals the different civic collectives that are active on and around Josaphat in relation to the agency of their house-garden-and-kitchen interventions. The projects, individuals, communities and their interventions that are discussed in the manuscript are represented according to their level of action and direct relation to Josaphat's ground. Moreover, the actor map aims to reveal the complex web of connections that emerges between these different agents. In addition, the size of the active communities is illustrated.

platform / association / institution

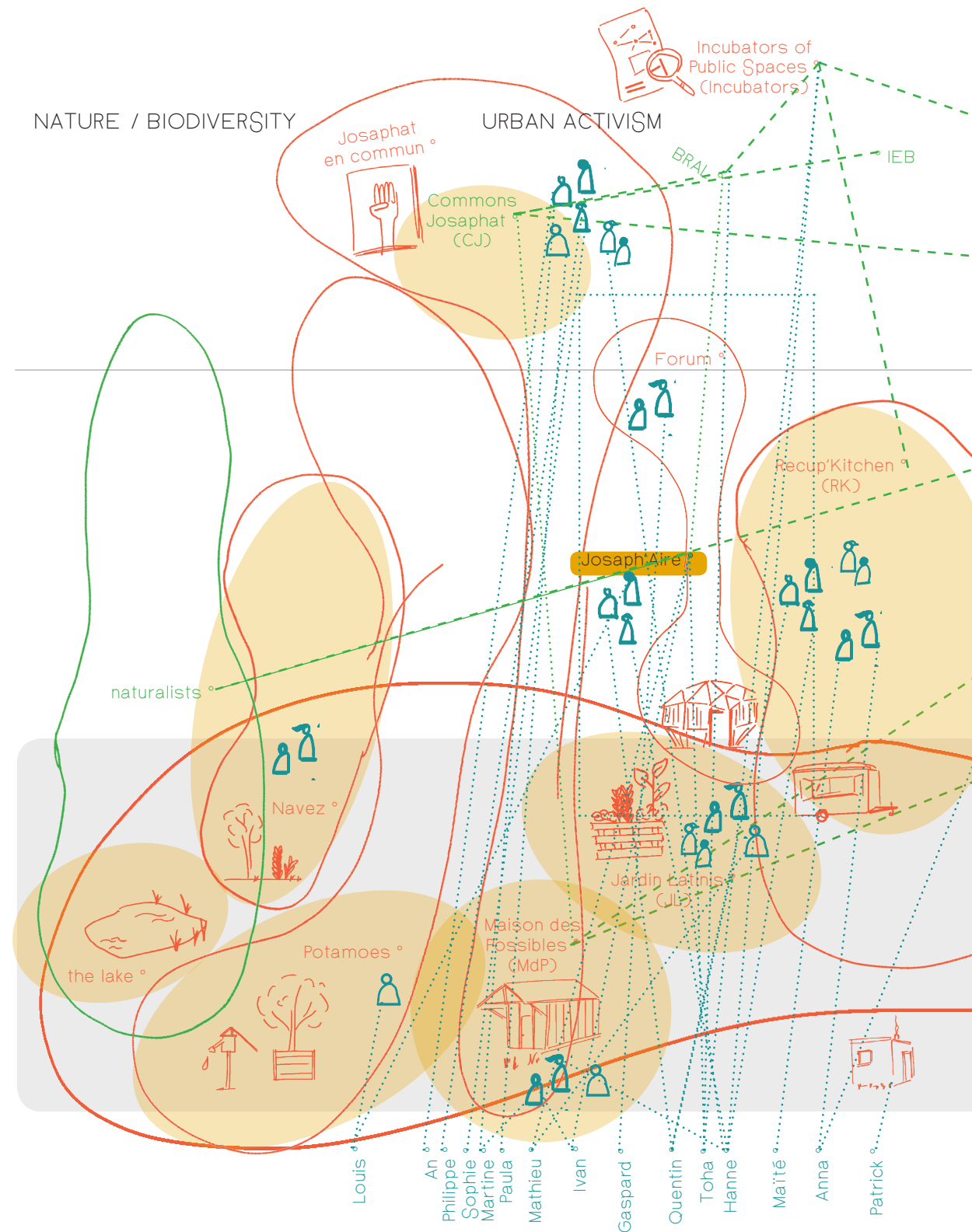
intevervention / project community

Josaphat's ground

Josaphat's air

 amount of key agents

personal agency



DIRECT NEIGHBORHOODS

OFFICIAL PLANNING

ACADEMIC

REGIONAL

LOCAL

PERSONAL

government  
BCR

Perspective

Bouwmeester

MSI / SAU

Comité de Site Josaphat  
(Comité)



° petition



° masterplan  
(RPA / PAD)

municipality  
Schaarbeek & Evere

neighborhood committees

Marie °

Frédéric °



# 00.03

## methodological framework FEET ON THE GROUND

*Er zijn veel waarheden (...).  
Er zijn veel meer waarheden die we nog niet kennen, die we  
ons niet eens kunnen voorstellen. En toch is elk ervan waar.  
(...)*

*Tussen die waarheidsclusters liggen superholtes, enorme  
gebieden waar geen waarheden voorkomen.*

*Soms, heel soms, snijden waarheden elkaar zoals twee rechte  
lijnen dat doen. Nog zeldzamer is het dat waarheden samen-  
vallen. Veel vaker lopen ze evenwijdig, hebben ze niets met  
elkaar gemeen, waardoor ze elkaar nooit zullen snijden.*

*- P. Verhelst (2015, p. 134)*

REC.2015.01.17 – First visit at Josaphat See TL.17.01.2015 "Exploring the field".

That cold January day I set foot on Josaphat's land for the first time. I had been around before. However, now I set foot on its muddy land.

Josaphat feels as an impenetrable swamp. Huge. Bare. An urban land within the city, yet deprived of human liveliness. Josaphat is not a love at first sight.

I have only just started my journey as a Ph.D. student and gradually getting to know Brussels. I carry the souvenirs of my master's dissertation at the "Boerenhof" in Ghent<sup>1</sup>. Where, together with the Boerenhof's immediate neighbors, I set up self-organized transitional use. Out of urban activism, we had started to garden at this space that was awaiting its destiny as a parking space, where we had gardened for activist temporary use. Where we had planted, built, discussed, lobbied, laughed, questioned and cared. Where we even managed to instigate significant changes in the official plans that were on the table.

What could I see at Josaphat? A hidden land of an enormous scale. With a planned future still too far to even grasp. It is loaded with the new yet massive ambitions to build an entirely new district at its territory. Josaphat feels out of reach. A dead zone even. It is cleared from its industrial past, slowly recovering from its scenic scars.

It is winter. It is cold. The sky is grey and unsettled, and it is drizzling. Finding the entrance is hard. I cannot find a path to guide me. I do not get as far as my feet sink in Josaphat's cold mud.

Will this be "my" place in Brussels for the coming years? What could happen here?

Little did I know back then...

REC.2015.03.17 - First true visit of Josaphat<sup>2</sup>

Here I am at Josaphat again.

I believe this was my first true encounter. Standing firm at its ground, breathing its air.

These last weeks, I have spent time walking more in its surroundings<sup>3</sup>. Exploring the different neighborhoods that make up its contours. I got to know Josaphat's non-existence in the eyes of its near residents. I started to reach a point of saturation in obtaining input by interviewing people in the streets or local shops.

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1 More info can be found in the master dissertation (Van Reusel, 2014) and the paper "How one tree can change the future of a neighborhood" (De Smet & Van Reusel, 2018) added in section 00.11.01.

2 See TL17.03.2015 "Visite de la friche".

3 See TL.05.03.2015 "Exploratory walking" and 09.04.02015 "Exploratory walking".

I slowly started to get to know the “Commons Josaphat” collective, a civic platform focusing on the commons potential at Josaphat's ground. Tentative, I tried to integrate myself in their dynamic. I am shifting my position from an attentive observant to a cautious participant. I dived in their self-organized process of civic imagination and research.

Today, I join Paula –one of the Josaphat commoners- on a guided visit at Josaphat's ground. Her guests are a group of architecture students coming from France, discovering the visioning process of Commons Josaphat as they wander over its open grassy landscape.

I arrived early and had Josaphat to myself for a while. The promise of spring is in the air. No rain today, the sun is peeking through the clouds. It is at this moment –sitting down in its long grass- that I start to grasp the exciting promises held within.

It is at this moment that I can feel a spaciousness awaken in me as I stand in the midst of its open field. I feel my thoughts and being can open up through its air<sup>4</sup>.

I feel I am standing in the midst of a new adventure. With a future that I still cannot see, but that carries a simmering awareness. Josaphat is a place of potential. It offers a ground for escape. I believe my agency truly anchored at this moment.

A sense of belonging was starting to build.

REC.2017.06.10 – Jour Josaph'Aire dag<sup>5</sup>

*"First of all, welcome!"*

Today, I kick off one of the three parallel workshops organized at Josaphat's ground. We had just set up the “Josaph'Aire” nonprofit. In its juridical structure, we see a tool to work on some crucial issues at stake for the multiplicity of agents that are present at Josaphat's ground.

One workshop focuses on governance. How can we, as a group of self-organized community initiatives build shared governance? How can we together take care of this corner of Josaphat that we share as the ground for our self-proclaimed transitional actions? The second discusses communication. How can we better exchange information among each other? How can we invite people from the outside and welcome them? The third workshop –and the one I lead- focuses on the spatial organization of our amalgam of micro-interventions at Josaphat's ground (see 00.03.fig.1). How do we make sure not to expand too far and endanger the valuable biodiversity breeding at Josaphat's 25 hectares of open land?

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4 More than two years later I would experience a similar momentum. It is April 2018, and I am sitting at the edge of the Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin. This is not my first visit. Looking over its openness and enjoying the broad view it offers, I could breathe the same air.

5 See TL.10.06.2017 “Jour Josaph'Aire dag”.

This workshop is not disconnected from the questions arising from the first and second workshops. How do we decide where we place what? How do we organize the stock of recuperated materials, our shared tools...? How do we make sure everyone is aware? How do we give place to newcomers who, like us, want to spontaneously –and without formal permission- set up their projects and constructions here? How do we make sure our self-built structures are well taken care of?

In the workshop, a mix of people come together; those who have known Josaphat and its commons-oriented uses for a while now. Those who live nearby and are curious, explore Josaphat's ground for the first time. Those who are active in temporary use and/or urban activism in Brussels and want to learn from ours or share their expertise. However, also those who are active in politics and make our city through their discussions.

The sun is out. So "my" team stray out at Josaphat's field that is made up by long grass and rare plant species. When we come back together after our exploratory walks, the group unites over Josaphat's openness, its simmering creativity but mostly its unique serenity despite its urban conditions.

So, what if we could create paths that would welcome people to go beyond this corner of Josaphat which we occupy. Could we trigger people to go beyond our scene filled with gardens and self-built structures in order for them to get to know the more than 25 hectares of nature out there?

We imagine soft, permeable paths that would guide visitors into Josaphat's vast majority of its generous space, its wonderful nature. These paths would guide the human presence concerning its unique fauna and flora. We could suggest to the owner of the site to help us realize these paths, to pay for them even. These paths would extend to the paths that are already there and as such could outline the first circulation for the future neighborhood planned to be developed here. These paths –who knows- might convince the future developers, inspire them to retain their permeability and softness in what will be realized for the neighborhood to be. These paths might demonstrate there is no place for heavy car traffic. These paths might be a way to obtain a spot at the negotiation table. These paths might be a way to preserve Josaphat's being today, to maintain its wild natural character in its future.

That Sunday evening when I go home, I felt the potential of Josaphat and us as a community in my veins. With the Josaph'Aire nonprofit, I see how things could scale up and out. In our shared imaginations, I can see an altering future for the Josaphat district. I see a different way of city making.

That was an exhausting and magnificent day at Josaphat's contested ground.

REC.2018.05.20 – Josaphat under negotiation<sup>6</sup>

I am not the first to arrive at Josaphat. In the nomadic neighborhood garden of "Jardin Latinis", I recognize familiar postures. I have arrived early to help out with the cooking

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<sup>6</sup> See TL.05.06.2018 "Negotiating the framework".

activities organized by the "Recup'Kitchen" collective.

Arriving on Josaphat feels like coming home. I know my route. I come with a key to open up our "roulotte" (circus wagon) transformed into a shared kitchen. I know my people. With a leaping heart, I anticipate the tensions that may arise later when we will find ourselves around the table.

I barely touch any of the food that we have recuperated for cooking together today. My ambition to help in staging a convivial encounter is overruled by my agency as one of the prominent figures in the messy organization of Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use. We are in the midst of diplomatic negotiations with the MSI/SAU<sup>7</sup>, the Region's urban development corporation which owns Josaphat's territory. Our Josaph'Aire nonprofit is negotiating a convention that would legalize, protect but also endanger our presence at Josaphat's southwest corner. A process in which the everyday reality at Josaphat's ground outruns and sometimes disturbs the fragile negotiations. A process in which the strategic and existential questions that arise along the tense negotiation process have a toxic effect on to co-existence of different agents and voices.

I spent my time catching up with the most recent happenings. I listen to the accumulated frustrations. I try to understand the numerous positions and questions. I try to intervene gently. At a certain moment, I cannot make sense anymore of my position. I walk away from our claimed southwest corner and leave myself over to Josaphat's long grass. In its vast nature zone, I recover thanks to its capacity to offer serenity and an escape. Later that day, I host a round table session to kick off the "Jour des Communs". After our shared lunch, I call my fellow agents and our visitors. In the burning sun of early summer, we discuss concrete and tactical actions that must be taken care of collectively. We need to recuperate water for the gardens, and tomatoes are waiting to be planted. The strategic and tenser concerns surface and intersect with the new ideas and dreams that are triggered. It is time to be more hands-on. Let's get some things done.

We all invest our heart and energy to build up Josaphat's air. Here we find common ground for our diverse ambitions that are increasingly leading to conflict. I feel I have lost grip in the coming together of diverse communities, visions, and concerns. I know it is part of the game.

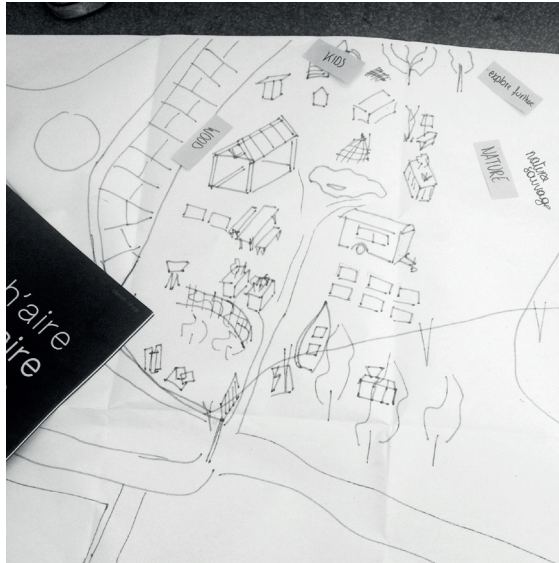
While we are installing a gutter to recuperate rainwater, a casual rhythmic play emerges. Someone started drumming on the rain barrel, while someone else is batting the plastic gutters or is chanting. We perform a rain dance.

In the everyday, I cherish to (re)find Josaphat's openness. Its beauty that maybe only we experience as such unites us.

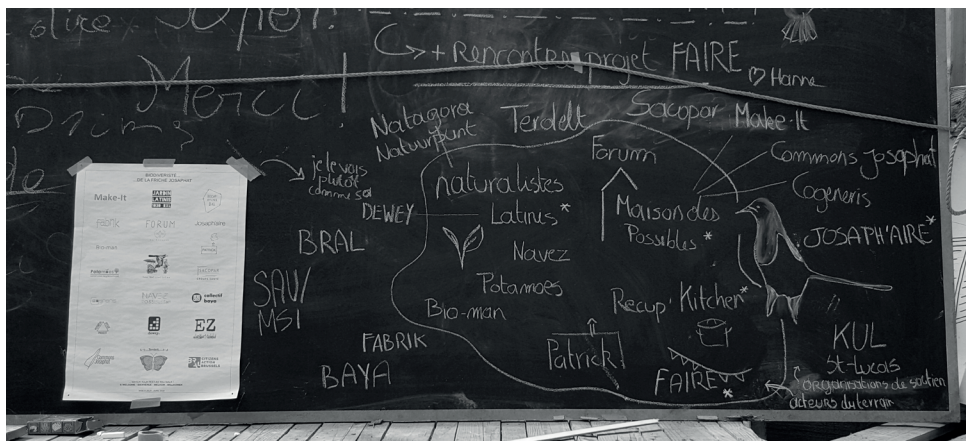
As we build on to our social and local networks, shared governance and caring, we –as "we"- anchor. Feet on Josaphat's ground. In the meanwhile, our foundations tremble as they are held under negotiation.

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7 Maatschappij voor Stedelijke Inrichting / Société d'Aménagement Urbain. The Brussels Capital Region's development cooperation.



00.03.fig.1 – Workshop on spatial organization during the Jour Josaph'Aire, June 2017.



00.03.fig.3 – A mapping of the biodiversity of the actors of Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use, May 2018.



00.03.fig.2 – Josaphat in its winter mood, January 2015.



## 00.03.01 Josaphat's ground

In this first section, I would like to introduce you to Josaphat. This site entails the ground of the doctoral research and design practice and, as such, is granted the honor to open this introductory chapter. I will discuss its identity (a) in its current being, (b) considering its planned future and (c) according to its state of affairs made up by urban activism.

### a. Josaphat's being

During the winter of 2014-2015, the Josaphat site in Brussels does not give a very welcoming impression. Its 25 hectares of unbuilt land offer a remarkable contrast with its urban environment (see 00.03.fig. 2). In winter, the Belgian weather conditions change Josaphat into a swampy land where your feet sink in hits cold mud. Every time during this season Josaphat will emit a moody and distant appearance<sup>8</sup>.

YEvery spring and summer -when the sun glances through- Josaphat reveals itself as a hidden pearl; evoking a strong sense of appreciation to those who have managed to find their way. One of its most appreciated qualities is the long reaching view the site allows for; one kilometer far, in the midst of the city.

Despite this openness, Josaphat is an island (see the map in section 00.02.03). Its open land forms a blind spot in the urban fabric of Brussels. Its perimeter is fenced off by trees on the west side, and an industrial zone with sports infrastructure create a barrier at the east. The Josaphat site is geographically lower than its surroundings, and there are only a few entry points. Those living next to it, barely know about its existence<sup>9</sup>. Like a womb, Josaphat isolates and protects.

Seen from above Josaphat's territory has the shape of a plume<sup>10</sup>. With a shaft drawn by the railway road that cuts it into two. Inside its envelope, Josaphat offers a sweep of openness. To its visitor, the site brings a rare experience of calmness and peacefulness despite its noisy conditions. Like a womb, Josaphat offers a secure comfort zone.

Its vast physical space is one that is reclaimed by nature. Its projected future is one of an entirely new district for Brussels. In anticipation, Josaphat's space is increasingly (re)-claimed by activist citizens. Today, the site provides a place where urban commons<sup>11</sup> are experimented in a self-proclaimed transitional use. Like a womb, Josaphat generates something lively and surprising.

As the seasons pass by and Josaphat changes its mood, its future is being planned, questioned and negotiated. Josaphat patiently awaits its future destination that aims to provide an answer to the burning housing crisis of Brussels<sup>12</sup>. As open land, the site

8 The students that have joined me working on and around the Josaphat site within the Spatial Mirror elective course start off their semester (February-June) by describing Josaphat's hostile posture to those who approach it for the first time.

9 This became clear during the exploratory walks and loose interview I conducted at the early stage of the doctoral research and design practice. See TL.23.02.2015, TL.05.03.2015 and TL.09.04.2015.

10 The logo of Commons Josaphat represents Josaphat as a feather.

11 The notion of the urban commons will be discussed in section 00.04.01 "Reconstructed experiences of urban commoning".

12 Nele Aernouts (2017) gives an elaborated account on the Brussels housing crises in her doctoral dissertation.



awaits its future that comes with the promise of dividing it into construction phases, overturning its ground by excavators and having its soil suffocated by concrete foundations.

Today, Josaphat patiently hosts exceptional biodiversity of fauna and flora. Including –at its southwest corner- a biodiversity of civic actors<sup>13</sup> (see the actor map in section 00.02.03 and 00.03.fig.3). Josaphat welcomes a multiplicity of commons-oriented urban architectural design (uAD ) initiatives that imagine, scout, construct and care for its everyday urban environment. Each in their way, these communities today explore an altering city tomorrow.

## b. Its planned future

The Josaphat site used to be an old marshaling yard. Once in disuse, its industrial activities made the place for development plans. Its strategic position in Brussels –in-between the European institutions and the airport- made Josaphat an attractive investment for the Brussels Capital Region (BCR). In 2005, the site had been bought by the Region's Society for Real Estate Acquisition (MVV/SAF<sup>14</sup>) with the goal to invest in Brussels' land.

Today as the organization owning Josaphat's territory has transformed<sup>15</sup> into the Urban Development Corporation (MSI/SAU<sup>16</sup>). The public<sup>17</sup> ownership is used as a tool to gain control in Brussels' urban development, which in general is in hands –and power- of private actors. The whole Josaphat zone of built and open land is, with its 33,5 hectares, labeled an area of regional interest. The MSI is –besides owning the territory- entrusted with the operational implementation of a strategy for Josaphat's planned development. Josaphat as such needs to deal with regional concerns mainly focusing on tackling the housing crisis. It is one of the pilot cases of this recently reformed public operator (MSI). As a result, Josaphat is now<sup>18</sup> destined to be developed into a mixed and sustainable neighborhood. In 2014, the government of the BCR approved a first strategic master plan<sup>19</sup>. Since then, the plans have undergone adaptations and gained precision. These changes happened in response to an environmental impact study<sup>20</sup> and have been further detailed for the green and public spaces<sup>21</sup> (Perspective & SAU/ MSI, 2018).

So far only general aspects of the strategic master plan have been communicated publicly, under the motto “Living and working in a park”. On the program<sup>22</sup>:

- ° 1585 dwellings with min 7ha of green public space,
- ° crucial facilities like schools and crèches and
- ° employment-generation activities like local shops, a hotel, and offices,

13 On the Josaphat site, the activist architect Gaspard Vanparys had hung up a poster that proposes to represent the biodiversity of civic actors that in his eyes have contributed / are contributing to the life at Josaphat. See the paper left in the photo of 00.03.fig.3. In response, I proposed an adapted scheme (drawing on the blackboard) with the aim to nuance the type and degree of involvement of the actors mentioned.

14 Maatschappij voor de Verwerving van Vastgoed / Société d'Acquisition Foncière.

15 On 12 August 2015 the MVV/SAF officially transformed into the MSI/SAU.

16 Maatschappij voor Stedelijke Inrichting / Société d'Aménagement Urbain

17 Josaphat's territory is owned by a society of public law, yet juridical its ownership is private.

18 The 8th of June 2018 the most recent plans (RPA) for Josaphat's development have been communicated in a public information moment hosted by the Regional planning institutions Perspective and the MSI (2018).

19 The 2014 “Richtplan” has been made by MS-a and Idea Consult.

20 The “milieueffectenrapport” has been conducted by Dries Consultants in 2015-2016.

21 The “Landschappelijke kwalificatie Studie” is made by Bureau Bas Smets in 2016.

22 Program as it is publicly available on the website of the MSI/SAU “josaphat.brussels” retrieved on the 7th of May 2018.

- ° 9ha of an urban industrial zone (re-organization of the existing industrial area),
- ° maintaining the existing sports infrastructure.

According to the MSI, the Josaphat neighborhood should be completed by 2030 (SAU/MSI, 2017).

Josaphat is a pilot case for the MSI and is one of the BCR's rare opportunities to have the development of such a vast area in control and operation by a public actor. Its development is under pressure to be an example case of sustainability and efficiency. In local media, like the reportage made by Otten (2017), Josaphat's planned development is reported to be contested by residents. However, equally, the necessity to provide a (partial) solution to the urgent need for housing in Brussels is recognized.

With a planned development in three phases -supposedly being finalized by 2030- Josaphat represents the way the authorities of the BCR see the future development of the city. In the words of the MSI (2017): *"The new Josaphat district is intended to be a model project, thanks to new procedures implemented by the Region for the development of its land reserves"*.

The planned development of the Josaphat site forms an interesting ground from which to research and act on the current state of affairs of urban architectural design in Brussels. As a publicly owned area of regional interest, of which the development process is currently still entirely in the hands of public actors, Josaphat stands for the envisioned future of Brussels.

### c. Its current state of affairs

In 2014, while the planning of the Josaphat site was increasingly gaining form, the former railway marshalling yard had been cleared. Josaphat's industrial past had to make space for its future plans. Its open territory was left bare; a sandy open surface (see 00.03.fig.4).

Four years later, nature reclaimed its place. Most of Josaphat's 25 hectares of open space have been left rather untouched as the site is still awaiting the first disruptions to realize its planned future. In the meanwhile, Josaphat is a field of astonishment for naturalists and can count on admiration from its visitors, once they have managed to find their way. And as most of its physical appearance is rather left in peace, its identity is being challenged and negotiated by several citizen groups.

Multiple citizen initiatives have looked to intermingle and claim their place, both in Josaphat's planned future as in its being today. The civic platform "Commons Josaphat" (CJ) claimed its territory and planned future as a commons. Nearby residents signed a petition to question Josaphat's planned density and a lack of say in this process. Numerous community initiatives have found a breeding ground at the site's open land. In self-proclaimed transitional use, they installed nomadic gardens ("Jardin Latinis", "Jardin Navez", "Bioman" and "Potamoes"), a sustainable kitchen ("Recup'Kitchen"), a house for socio-cultural use ("Maison des Possibles") and a structure to host horizontal decision-making ("Forum").

Josaphat's diverse uses each have their own agenda and are each carried by different yet related communities. They cluster in the site's south-west corner (see 00.03.fig.5), where direct access to the adjacent neighborhood is possible. Incrementally, several commons-oriented initiatives have anchored at this part of Josaphat's territory. (In)explicitly

redefining its status as “commons lab”.

The presence of these agents has been tolerated, briefly recognized, valued, contested and recuperated by Josaphat’s owner, the Region’s MSI. To them any potential blockage for the ambitious development plans is to be avoided. Any potential complication that might disrupt the complex negotiations with other stakeholders is to be smothered. Yet a sense of appreciation for these unasked for initiatives cannot be denied, if only by recognizing their presence on their official website (SAU/ MSI, 2018a).

The JosaphAire (JA) nonprofit has been founded beginning 2017. Triggered by the demand of the MSI to have a legal and unique mediator for the amalgam of agents active on Josaphat. A convention would formalize this “occupation de fait” (factual occupation); offering recognition, protection, a framework, limits... But as time passes in this administrative and political negotiation process, life at Josaphat continues to go its own way. Positions shifts. Opinions and emotions move.

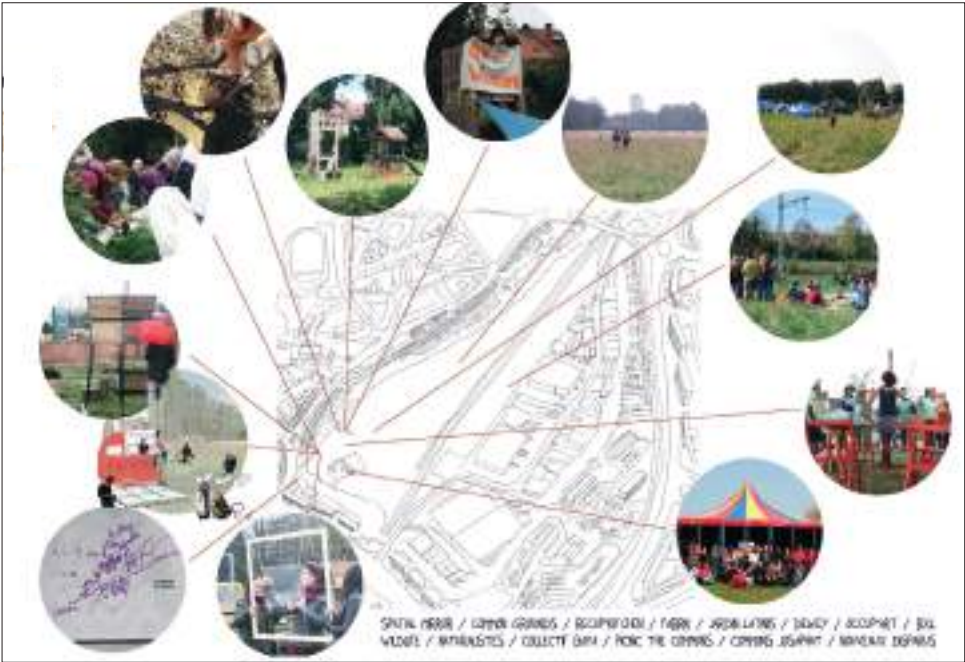
The proposed agreement can be read as a significant step forward; bringing an official recognition, pushing the agents to structure and organize, offering a possibility to be heard and to influence a –albeit only in a small way- part of the on-going planning... Yet the threats and provocations of the convention are not to be overlooked; offering weak or not even any protection for Josaphat’s users, imposing an overruling authority of owner over user, silencing the agents’ voices, shifting responsibilities and costs to the shoulders of (volunteering) citizens, a risk of negative recuperation as the planning procedures advance... The convention is still in negotiating process. Cracks are starting to emerge. Whether a door is opening or our foundations are falling apart, still needs to become clear.

Josaphat’s being does not only represents the BCR’s ambition considering the future of the city, the site also provides the playground and battlefield for civic agents to claim their space in uAD. Its open territory, mood swings and waiting attitude, provide a ground for some crucial questions at stake. Can we build our city as a commons? And more importantly how can we do so? How far should / could / do we have to go?





< 00.03.fig.4 - The Josaphat site after the former marshaling yard has been cleared, 2014. Image by Paula Bouffioux.



00.03.fig.5 - A mapping of the richness of commoners at Josaphat, August 2016.

Commons Josaphat organizes a general assembly at the tennis cafeteria adjacent to the Josaphat site. One of the workshops is dedicated to deal with Josaphat's pioneering transitional uses. In my combined identity as a researcher and urban activist, I co-organize and facilitate this workshop.

After one year of spontaneous and recurring actions and events on Josaphat, strategic questions arise considering these temporary –aspired transitional- uses. We feel a need to research its potential and to trigger more ideas and projects to join the Jardin Latinis and Recup'Kitchen initiatives.

And not to neglect, high on the agenda is the debate considering the relation between the civic activists and the MVV (nowadays MSI). As owner and planning organization responsible for Josaphat, the MVV has long been unresponsive to our requests, while they tolerate our presence on Josaphat. An official call for temporary use of Josaphat's ground is promised to be launched soon. This call would offer an official framework in which the current initiatives would be able –or forced- to integrate. "Soon" turns out to be an elastic timeframe.

The promise of an official call has not been fulfilled<sup>23</sup>, however, has sparked our imagination as it announces an immense potential to boost the experimentation of urban commons. However, we also feel a threat as it could overrule our personal yet shared vision on Josaphat as an open space for generative city making.

With an experience of one year of having fun to act on Josaphat spontaneously, we feel it is time to get some more elaborated and agreed upon strategies on board. Enters the "atelier occup'action" workshop. We kick off with a diagnostic component. In a round table conversation, we invite our guests to introduce themselves and express the ideas/projects they envision for Josaphat's transitional use. While mapping these ambitions and desires on a timeline, the conversation takes over (see 00.03.fig.8).

As many different participants express their ideas, questions, and concerns, it occurs to us they naturally bring up the relational values<sup>24</sup>. One way or another, these fellow commoners express their underlying aspirations as they present their proposals or imaginations for Josaphat. An edible forest that would give space to more healthy food and collective caretaking or a skate park that would be built and maintained by youngsters, a commons ambition is present in all the ideas.

As always in participatory processes, nothing goes as planned. The workshop takes a different turn, and as facilitators, we allow and –pleasantly surprised by the depth of conversation- enjoy the round table conversation to take over our planned program. It is inspiring and exciting to give space for people to express their –often banal- ideas with their –less banal- generous motivations. The question considering how to empower and support such commons-oriented initiatives remains still open. The round table session is inspiring but leaves us wondering how we could provide the space for such projects to

<sup>23</sup> For the anecdote, this promise is still not fulfilled in June 2018.

<sup>24</sup> The concept of relational values, aims to move away from the economic use of the term "value" and is based on the discussion on the concept by David Bollier (2016a) in "*Re-imagining Value*".

grow within a transitional use for Josaphat. Moreover, how would this stand to the in the air hanging promise/threat of the official call for temporary use by the MVV? What common strategy could secure us to gain/maintain our voice in the occupation of Josaphat?

After an extensive session of sharing our ideas, these questions are on the table. The aspired answer/result we come up with is to articulate a (relational) value charter for transitional use. Such a charter could guide us as occupants among each other, but more importantly it could serve as a proposition for the official call promised to arrive in January 2016<sup>25</sup>. It would consist of a document that would help us lobby for a commons-oriented approach.

This strategy we know is a guess. It is another step in Commons Josaphat's broader strategy to trigger altering urban development. Seen the cumbersome dialoguing process with the MVV, we are aware the odds are not in our favor. Though we are all convinced, this does not mean we should not give it a try. However, a plan B quickly adds on. In case our proposition of a charter would land into deaf ears and cannot find its way to be integrated into the official process, we might find ways to force it in. Even if the famous call would not be commons-oriented, we could collectively apply with one shared Brussels project. Let's hack the competition this call might impose and bring together all Brussels most relevant actors in temporary use and all those willing to join. No concurrence but collectivity. A joint Brussels proposal for the public actors to take or to leave. Another way we might manage to shift the unequal power balance, where we –citizens– would be in charge.

In order to continue this strategy, we plan a series of follow up workshops (January - February 2016) for which the round table discussion of the CJ assembly in December forms the base to work towards five leading principles. In this process, the desired values for transitional use<sup>26</sup> are explicitly blended in with CJ's long term visioning<sup>27</sup>.

As an outcome of the occup'action workshop I made a collage (see 00.03.fig.6). I am bringing the numerous ideas together into one image. Most importantly relating it to keywords and ambitions, or shared and relational values.

REC.2014.04.24 – Video: launching event Commons Josaphat<sup>28</sup>

On the 24th of April 2014 -in a heroic momentum- a group of activist citizens crossed the Latinislaan that runs along Josaphat's west south corner. At the grey concrete wall that fences off the site, they gather. Two young women stand on an improvised stage (see

25 Originally the launch of an official call for temporary use was said to happen in October 2015, later on this date shifted to January 2016. Throughout the following years the promise of an open call would remain in the air, regularly postponed for a couple of months (before the summer of 2016, after the summer of 2016, ...). Today (June 2018) the call still has to be launched. No timing of when this is supposed to happen is on the table at the moment.

26 These five key principles for Josaphat's transitional use are discussed in section 00.03.02.d "A site of action".  
27 The introduction of this charter discusses the relation to the commons and the proposal by Commons Josaphat. For the charter see data.160716 "Proposition cadre usage transitoire".

28 I was not part of this event, but have lived it by the video reportage "rencontre Commons Josaphat" made by Dewey. Dewey asbl. (2014). Dewey: rencontre avec Commons Josaphat [Film]. In: YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0XzSpHGy0Y>

00.03.fig.7). They echo statements through a megaphone: *“Come and admire one of our last land reserves in Brussels!”* *“Josaphat is our common good.”* People are invited to climb red-carpeted stairs to overlook the wall and admire Josaphat. *“Hurry, because soon this land won’t be public property anymore!”*

Commons Josaphat with this performative act launches its self-organized call for ideas. The goal is to illustrate that the city can be produced and governed according to the concept of the commons. A call that is not competitive but wants to be cooperative. *“Commons are limited resources that egoist uses might extinguish, but that cooperative usage can valorize for all.”*

The *“in case of emergency”* box that is installed in front of Josaphat’s grey wall is smashed open with a hammer. The actor reclaims his emergency tool, a shovel and holds it proudly in the air. The symbol of the Commons Josaphat collective, a representation of the right to *“make our own city”*.

These citizens see other ways for how the city can be constructed. Josaphat -our land- should be protected from egoist and extractive usages. Instead, a cooperative and commons-oriented approach is put up front. *“Let’s construct this ‘island’ together!”* Under the slogan *“In case of emergency, make your own city”* fellow citizens are invited to join the debate and to join the imagination process for Josaphat as a commons.

REC.2015.03.26 – Debate marathon at Bozar

Commons Josaphat is one of the five Brussels initiatives exhibited in the We-Traders exhibition organized by the Goethe Institut (2015). The installation has traveled along six cities –Berlin, Brussels, Lisbon, Madrid, Toulouse, and Turin- from which it represents *“We-Traders”*; civic initiatives that *“swap crisis for city”*. As final stop, the venue lands at Bozar in Brussels. An exhibition that also there gets combined with an open call<sup>29</sup> and a series of events in which the local presented initiatives actively participate.

Commons Josaphat for this occasion organizes a debate marathon within the Bozar exhibition setting. The content is made up by the work of thematic workshops<sup>30</sup> that had built on to the ideas they had accumulated through their call launched in April 2014. Different working groups had emerged, and all together these have contributed to writing a shared proposal discussing how the city –and more particularly Josaphat- could be produced as a commons.

In the setting of the We-Traders exhibition, the draft version of this written proposal is presented and discussed in depth. Throughout hours of debate, the members of Commons Josaphat present the different themes that are addressed. After which time was given and discuss these with the audience. This moment serves as a critical peer review of the collective work and further builds up the content for the *“Josaphat en commun”* publication (Commons Josaphat, 2015b).

29 I participated and won the open call for Brussels with the proposal *“Bazaar festival”*. See TL.04.03.2015 – We-Traders exhibition // BAZAAR FESTIVAL.

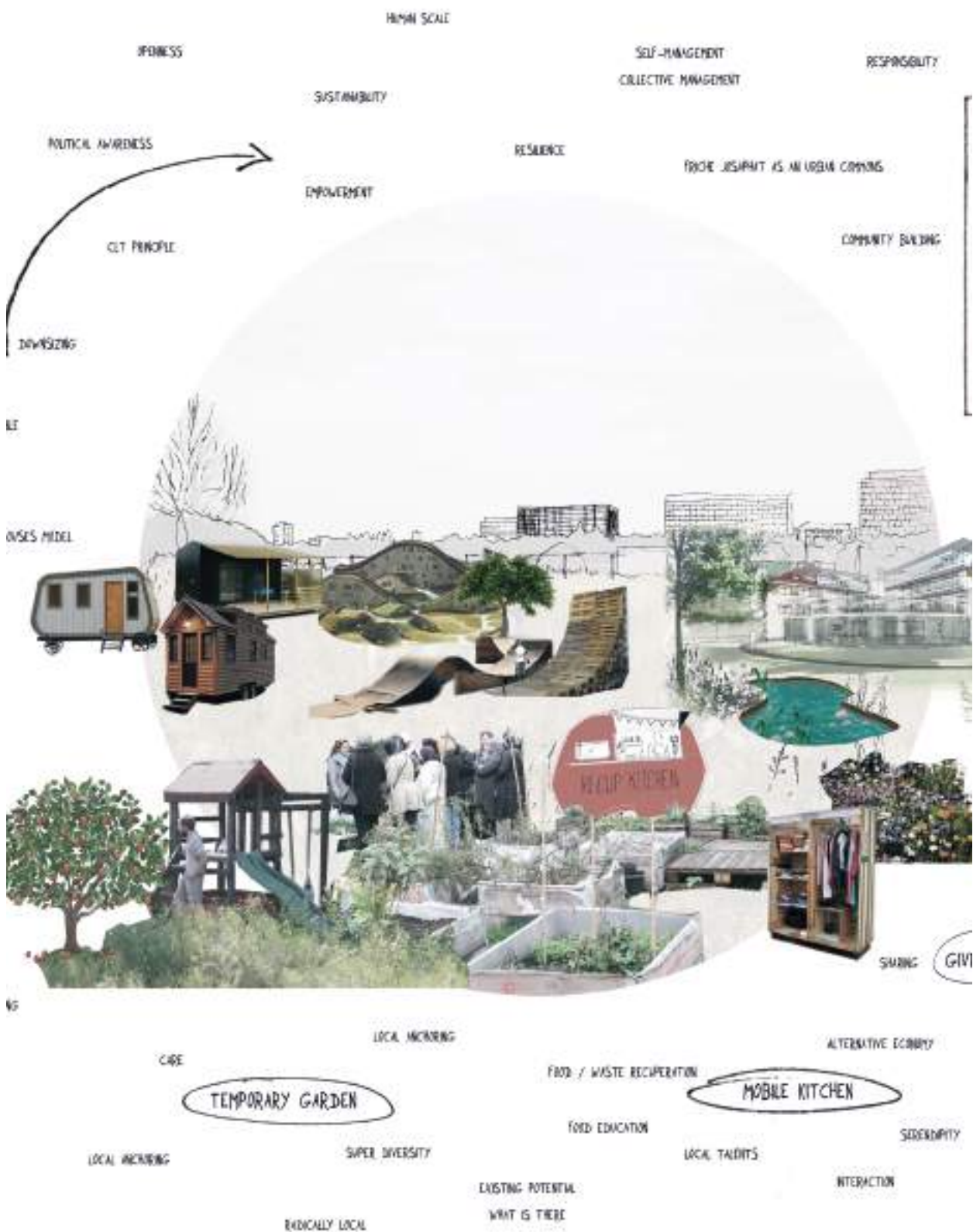
30 See TL.19.01.2015 – Open atelier Commons Josaphat.



As I am still growing to integrate myself fully within the CJ collective, that day I join as part of the audience. To me, this was the occasion to obtain an overall view of the collective's work as I had joined quite late in the thematic workshop sessions. It is an enriching yet exhausting experience.

The marathon overruns the themes that through the call for ideas came out as fundamental for a commons city:

- ° A shared / collective governance
- ° A circular and plural economy
- ° An ecological-urban structure
- ° Innovative housing
- ° The public space as common good
- ° Sustainable mobility
- ° An alternative financial model
- ° Positive energy



00.03.fig. 6 –As a result, a collage brings together the ideas and maps their relational values, December 2015.



00.03.fig. 7 –Commons Josaphat invites people to admire Josaphat, April 2014, video still from video by Dewey.



00.03.fig. 8 –During the round table session ideas are mapped on a timeline, December 2015.

## 00.03.02 A living lab at large

In the first section of this chapter (00.03.01) I have introduced Josaphat as the ground of the doctoral research and design practice by highlighting (a) its appearance as the place it is, (b) its planned being for the future and (c) its current state of affairs. Hoping I have allowed you to make up an impression of the ground Josaphat entails, I here (00.04.02) aim to unravel its position as a living lab at large which both consist of a method implemented for (a) the Incubators of Public Spaces research, (b) the Brussels commoners –(c) moving beyond Josaphat- and (d) the on-site agency

### a. An incubator

Josaphat claimed its ground within this doctoral research and design practice as one out of two potential urban living lab locations for the **Incubators of Public Spaces** research project<sup>31</sup>. The Incubators research (2014-2017) aimed at supporting participation in urbanism through the creation of a digital platform (Verbeke & Pak, 2014). The Incubators platform would support micro-interventions in public space (for Josaphat within temporary use) through crowdsourcing and crowdfunding. Part of this ambition was the aim to experiment this ICT driven innovation at urban living labs in London, Brussels, and Turin. Here is where –to me- Josaphat and its potential considering civic engagement in uAD for public spaces came into the picture.

For Brussels, the **choice for Josaphat** as urban living lab occurred as evident. The other –original- option of the “Schaarbeek Vorming” site could not compete with the already strong civic engagement happening around Josaphat<sup>32</sup>. Josaphat had been introduced by BRAL<sup>33</sup>, a local organization that is well acquainted with the ins and outs of Brussels urbanism and which was an official partner in the Incubators research. The preference for

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31 As Incubators consortium we have described the project on our website as following: *“Incubators of Public Spaces is a JPI Urban Europe research project that aims to support participation in urbanism. Incubators is intended to develop a user friendly online platform to expand the opportunities for civic engagement in urban design. By combining co-creative software and crowdfunding, this research project implements innovative technologies to provide the means to grow and care for places on a small and local scale. By facilitating the realization of multiple micro-interventions Incubators targets to build on a gradual regeneration of public spaces. The development of the software will be fed by, and experimented through 3 urban living labs in European cities; Brussels, London and Turin.”* (Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium).

The Department of Architecture of the KU Leuven, campus Sint-Lucas Brussel was one of the members of the Incubators consortium. The Brussels research team of the KU Leuven contributed to the overall research and was specifically responsible for the action research on the local living lab. This Brussels living lab within Incubators was situated at the Josaphat site where the self-organized temporary uAD interventions on-site as well as the study of the broader context informed the development of the digital Incubators platform. The site as well made up a testing ground throughout the development process of the Incubators research and platform.

KU Leuven team working on Incubators are consisted of Hanne Van Reusel, prof. Johan Verbeke, prof. Burak Pak and Anneleen Van der Veken. For the work on the Brussels living lab, the Department of Architecture worked together with BRAL.

32 The most decisive factor was the active civic interest pioneered by Commons Josaphat. An open collective that describes itself as an independent platform advocating the commons as valid way to govern the city (Commons Josaphat, 2017).

33 BRAL is an urban movement for citizen action in Brussels. In their search to defend the quality of life in Brussels BRAL is in constant research for sustainable, participative ways to develop the city. With four decades of experience BRAL is an important agent that contributes to and supports the civic scene that evolves around Josaphat.

Josaphat was informed by its strategic role for the city (area of regional interest), its urban scale (an entire new district), the timing of its process (supposedly having the first development phase launched within the research timing<sup>34</sup>), its public ownership (supposedly more space to negotiate for the common good) and the diversity in surrounding neighborhoods (having near residents that are directly affected by its planned future).

In the JPI Urban Europe approach formed the first input from which to study and engage on Josaphat. In their framework, **urban living labs** are perceived as “*test grounds in a real-world environment*” (JPI Urban Europe, 2018, p. 1). The ambition is to involve people in the entire process, not just as users but more importantly as co-creators. The living lab approach recognizes the complexity of everyday contexts and orients at integrating innovation into this reality, a method that seems to be in line with how Josaphat’s ground as approached by Commons Josaphat.

The project application for Incubators of Public Spaces leaves the definition of the living lab method quite open. The interaction with and contributions from multiple actors is aimed to trigger the co-evolution of the living lab and the related development of the Incubators platform. The living lab should stand in definite relation to local communities and the context in which it is situated. For the rest it remains up to the local research teams to define what a living lab is and could be for the Incubators project. Its implication can be tailored to the specific research ambitions and the particularities of the local situation. This local anchorage allowed a robust case-specific approach in which personal engagement has space to impact on how the living lab method is implemented.

As such the civic scene that was already moving on and around Josaphat would strongly influence the living lab approach taken up in this doctoral research and design practice.

The Incubators consortium had made a strong emphasis on **the governmentality of the urban living labs** to which a specific work package was dedicated. According to the planning, this was one of the first tracks to develop and the base from which then the actual living lab would be set up. Incubators proposes a “PPP+P”: Public-Private Participation oriented at integrating communities of People as surplus “P”. A promising starting point, though not that evident in practice. In the undefined yet ambitious framework of the Incubators urban living lab model, the Brussels one has marked its own path. Partly due to Incubators strong objective to involve a wide range of stakeholders which turned out to be a quite puzzling demand to start with. Josaphat in this would mark its symbolic status to represent the amalgam of agents involved in Brussels urban planning and the challenge this makes up.

At the kick-off event of the Incubators project, the Brussels team only had the promise of a partnership with the BRAL nonprofit on the table. The project application had not managed to include the public planning bodies (at that time MVV<sup>35</sup>), nor were any private actors in the picture –at Josaphat also not at stake yet<sup>36</sup>. This imposed clear limits to the aspired PPP+P governance for the Brussels living lab. It appeared challenging to link the implementation and experimentation of the digital Incubators platform to the actual

34 At the start of the research, the development of the first phase of Josaphat was planned to happen in 2016.

35 More public planning bodies were at stake, yet throughout the research it became clear the MVV (now MSI) was the main organization in charge.

36 Until today (June 2018) no private constructor is selected to take care of the masterplan and development of the Josaphat district to come. Only since February 2018 six potential consortia are in the running, yet these are currently still in state of competition with one each other.

issues at stake, at least considering the public and official procedures<sup>37</sup>.

However, this also triggered a space of freedom to look for **interaction and collaboration with civic actors**. The work of Commons Josaphat (CJ) provided relevant input for the Incubators' ambition to look deeper into how a digital platform can expand opportunities for participation in urbanism and more specifically for micro-interventions in public spaces. Furthermore, CJ has triggered awareness on Josaphat and its valuable position in Brussels' urban development<sup>38</sup>. All together the conditions made up by these particular relations to the various stakeholder of Josaphat, made it -as living lab for Incubators- mainly a relevant ground to focus on the interaction with the "+P" of people.

Looking to emphasize the people-side of urban development within the Incubators living lab, an interesting relation between the Incubators research and the agency of CJ revealed itself. The call of ideas by CJ became a significant reference for self-organized crowdsourcing. While the Incubators living labbing also intended to nourish the work of CJ.

In partnership with CJ, the on-site activities became entangled with the Incubators living lab. Throughout the doctoral research and design practice, a distinction between what was the Incubators living lab and the agency of CJ would have consciously remained ambiguous. This merger resulted in an Incubators living lab that got involved into / triggered some of the unasked for uses of Josaphat. Within the Incubators framework, these uses are approached as transitional micro-interventions in public space that informed and challenged the making of the digital platform.

Getting to know Josaphat through the Incubators project has been quite a special introduction. Especially compared to many of my peers in urban activism that are engaged on its ground, my starting point to explore Josaphat was the one of a (Incubators) researcher. In the process of setting up the **academic "Incubators living lab"** in entanglement with/as part of local communities and their struggle was a hand-in-hand process with developing and positioning this doctoral research and design practice. Josaphat, as such, has been from the very beginning more than a research living lab for incubating micro-interventions in public space.

## b. A commons lab

As already slightly addressed in the previous sections the pioneering work of **Commons Josaphat** impacts on Josaphat's identity, not at least for this doctoral research and design practice. The choice for Josaphat as the ground of CJ's visionary proposal had not been random. This group of engaged citizens had gathered early 2014 over their shared interest in diverse commoning projects in Brussels. In a first brainstorm, they had chosen Josaphat as the base to bring together and connect the many innovative ways in

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37 It turned out to be highly challenging to convince the MVV (later MSI) to collaborate on the Incubators research. As one of the learnings from the Incubators research I would stress the need to include public stakeholders from the application process of a research project on. Especially when urban living labbing is involved I believe an early and conscious engagement might facilitate more impact on the field and within planning administrations.

38 Amongst others by organizing a public debate including key actors, just before the elections, May 2014. More info can be found on the website of Commons Josaphat: <https://commonsjosaphat.wordpress.com/past-events/>



which citizens experiment new ways of community living<sup>39</sup>. Josaphat as a zone of regional interest representing the future and publicly lead development of the city formed a productive soil on which they could build their commons-oriented visioning process.

Their **interest in Josaphat is one of potential**. Josaphat bears a potential to rethink the future of the city, more specifically Brussels. The site entails the potential to give space to the many exciting and community-oriented solutions the members of Commons Josaphat see popping up in their city and beyond. Moreover Josaphat as public land - “*which means it is ours*” (Commons Josaphat, 2017)- welcomes to claim the making of the city to be ours.

Late 2013 CJ kicked off, this is before the Incubators research, and this doctoral research and design practice got started. In the following year, the CJ collective -as a freshly emerging platform for commons-oriented urban activism- just started to give their best to unravel Josaphat’s potential. While in parallel the official planning process for Josaphat’s future development became public. The tentative approval by the Brussels Capital Region’s government (March 2014) became a game changer that made the Josaphat commoners reposition their initial work from an open reflection to one that could trigger a constructive change of what was apparently already on the table. From that moment on, envisioning **Josaphat’s urban future became a public-civic discussion**, loaded with power games and politics. One in which Commons Josaphat agile acted its part by organizing political debates (May 2014) in the prospect of the upcoming regional and federal elections of 2014.

Poking into the political side of urban development CJ invited (Brussels) citizens to an open call for ideas in April 2014. The call was brief; tell in ten lines what your proposal is for Josaphat and then discuss how it fits in a commons-oriented approach. During a vibrant performance in April 2014<sup>40</sup> the call is launched; Josaphat is to be imagined as an urban commons.

CJ’s **commons claim** on Josaphat has put the site on the map of activist Brussels and made it known to commoners all over Europe. Due to CJ Josaphat became marked as a unique site of potential for self-organization of citizens, commons-oriented city making and urban activism. Josaphat in this obtains a position as a place where participation in urbanism can be rethought at a significant scale –the one of a whole district- and with an unaccustomed constructive citizen movement at the barricade. The call by CJ formulates a holistic and interdisciplinary proposition to advocate the potential of commoning without seeking extreme opposition to what is at stake.

Since their iconic call for ideas, the pioneering work of CJ and the on-going action of its members had put Josaphat on the map as a “**commons lab**” before the name even got acquainted. The notion of a commons lab is used in the context of other commons-oriented initiatives –such as in Antwerp and Berlin- that show striking parallels with the ambitions of the CJ platform. The “Commons Lab Antwerp” defines their laboratory as “*an experimental city lab investigating ‘Antwerp as a commons’; new forms of collaborative city-making that are leading urban areas towards new forms of participatory urban governance, inclusive economic growth, and social innovation. It’s founded by a few active citizens who will try to partner with social innovators, local authorities, businesses, civil society organizations, and knowledge institutions. The ultimate goal is to create a more*

39 Based on information obtained in conversation with Sophie, one of the founding members of Commons Josaphat. Interview 24th of April 2015 in Brussels.

40 See REC.2014.04.24 “Video: launching event Commons Josaphat”.

*sustainable, democratic and just city.*” (Commons Lab Antwerpen, 2018). A description that –if you replace “Antwerp” by “Josaphat” or “Brussels”–could easily fit the work of CJ.

Similar to the Berlin commons lab then, Josaphat under this label acts as “*an experimental playground*” for local actors and those beyond to explore how to “*foster more communal, convivial and caring ways of living, thinking and playing together*” (Wachstumswende Netzwerk, 2018). It is precisely this commons-oriented and playful/experimental identity that makes Josaphat and the wealth of commons-oriented ideas received through CJ’s open call such a fertile ground from which to study and explore the practice of urban commons. Both on a theoretical and practical level and more interesting in the overlap of both.

This particular claim on Josaphat as a commons lab is an open invitation to imagine, scout, construct and care for the city of tomorrow with people and communities at its core. Complimentary to Josaphat as an urban living lab for the Incubators research, the work of CJ has built a **civic research laboratory** around Josaphat. Josaphat in its intertwined academic and civic interest offers fertile ground to explore the potential of urban activism and participation in Brussels uAD, and more particularly the upcoming commons buzz vibrating in its air.

### c. An extended civic research

Commons Josaphat’s “appel à idées” (call for ideas) had its effect and positioned Josaphat as a **commons-oriented civic research lab**. Moreover, the work of CJ reached much further than their initial call for ideas and evolved into a collectively written proposal for Josaphat as a commons neighborhood. This visionary proposal has extended into several interlinked yet autonomous trajectories.

To start with the over 40 proposals in response to the open call had been exhibited (October 2014) and were followed up through a series of thematic workshops that were organized end 2014, beginning 2015. Clustered around topics such as housing, public space, governance, and finances; people with diverse backgrounds came together and built on their own and others’ ideas.

The result was an intensive co-creation process with input coming from people that advocate water in the city as common resource, who are active in establishing commons in ICT, who are connected to Community Land Trust Brussels, that are active in urban activism, are engaged architects, doctoral researchers or experts looking at health in the city. An interdisciplinary team got horizontally organized around this collective visioning exercise.

The different themes got elaborated with a focus on how the underlying values and commoning processes could be translated to an operational urban development on the scale of the Josaphat site. In this way, the diverse proposed ideas that had been gathered in response to the open call translated into a forty-page booklet; articulating a **proposal for Josaphat as a commons neighborhood**.

“*Josaphat en commun*” (Commons Josaphat, 2015a, 2015b) has been published and publically presented in September 2015. A festive event was organized at Josaphat with the local media joining to report on the work of CJ<sup>41</sup>. The proposal discusses how the future development of the city –like at stake for Josaphat– can happen in another way. A

41 Among others resulting in a reportage on CJ’s proposal by Steven Van Garsse (Van Garsse, 2015).



way of city-making that is inspired by the theory and practice of the commons. Bringing to the forefront the potential of civic communities to organize themselves and to collectively take care of common resources, such as affordable housing, public space, and the natural environment, a discussion on the way the urban environment is developed is at the heart of this proposal for an altering uAD in Brussels.

In follow-up of the launching event in September 2015 numerous other dissemination activities were invested into by the commoners. Different publics in Brussels were reached through numerous presentations. Also, internationally the work of CJ got picked up, and commoners engaged in sharing their proposal in relation to other related cases. Apart from this public dissemination of the collectively built expertise and their collective imagination, CJ also engaged in lobby work and presented their proposal to actors on the regional level and the two municipal governments at stake in the Josaphat development. Also the MSI –as the main agent in charge of the development of Josaphat- and the cabinet of the BCR’s minister-president welcomed CJ to present their proposal (March 2016).

Josaphat as civic research living lab as such **extends far beyond the physical barriers of Josaphat** itself and carries it and its potential out to city halls, conference rooms, local community houses and also just on Josaphat; picnicking in its long grass during a lovely spring evening.

In continuation of the 2015 publication of the commons proposal, CJ further advanced its work through **three lines of flight**. Each of these trajectories went their direction and became more autonomous while remaining in dialogue with one another.

° The internal working group “Santé” approaches health and wellbeing as a commons. They start from the point of view that quality of life within the everyday urban environment is fundamental for wellbeing. This group contributed by adding a chapter to the “*Josaphat en commun*” proposal considering this approach to health. Also, the group is also active on the field and has set up a collaboration with local “Maisons médicales” (medical houses) where they installed -among other initiatives- a photo exhibition by Paula Bouffieux; picturing the diversity of agents at Josaphat (see 00.03.fig.9)<sup>42</sup>. Also, also a series of participatory walks were organized at Josaphat to instigate conversation on health and the commons. With this Josaphat gained an additional dimension that reaches out to another discipline; connecting health and urbanism as intractable alliances.

° Another –although slightly in overlap- group of commoners continued the work on the proposal articulated in “*Josaphat en commun*” (Commons Josaphat, 2015b) by developing an “îlot modèle” or model building block. Starting from the schematic masterplan<sup>43</sup> for Josaphat, one building block of the future neighborhood was selected (see 00.03.fig. 10). Around this building block a group of citizens, associations and professionals created a commons-oriented plan for its development. Bringing together an intergenerational co-housing project, a cooperative supermarket, the Brussels Community Land Trust, a school working with alternative pedagogical model etcetera, an architectural and financial plan was developed in an innovative co-creative manner.

With this, the Josaphat living lab merged the philosophical, yet practice-oriented proposal of Commons Josaphat with an entrepreneurial attitude. Economic realities –yet not giving in to pure profit driven forces-, architectural planning and innovative

42 The same series of photos were also exhibited during the “Jour JosaphAire”, see TL.2017.06.10.

43 Being the “Richtschema” made by MS-a and Idea Consult.

mechanisms of co-creation were integrated into the official masterplan –or at least as far as we had access to it. The on-going work on the *ilot modèle* illustrates the proposed Josaphat commons neighborhood is a feasible endeavor. Utopia and reality got more tightly intertwined.

Also, this work has been disseminated on various occasion and had been presented to the MSI. This last action left the commoners with the vague promise there might be a place for such a commons development approach in the second phase of Josaphat's development<sup>44</sup>. In the meanwhile, the concept and its methods are being proposed for other development projects at stake in Brussels. What started at Josaphat's breeding ground, is reaching beyond its territory.

° As the third element, the working group "occup'action" focused on the use of Josaphat within the here and now of today's reality. Playfully taking advantage of Josaphat's availability as awaiting space, temporary –or better transitional- use is approached as the first building block for the commons neighborhood. This group followed, took part in, supported and partially initiated more lasting uses of Josaphat.

As team occup'action, CJ organized picnics to bring the debate back to its physical ground (see 00.03.fig.11). This group has facilitated numerous workshops that led to the collective writing of a charter for the self-proclaimed transitional use<sup>45</sup>.

In the summer of 2016 the "wasteland FESTIVAL de la friche" hosted a series of presentations of and debates on interesting exemplar cases dealing with local money, alternative housing solutions, water management as a commons... This festival transformed the central table of the nomadic Latinis garden at Josaphat into a platform for inspirational conversation.

Besides, through the occup'action agency CJ's proposal for a "*Huis van de Commons*" (House of Commons) obtained a subsidy of 10.000 euros<sup>46</sup>. Furthermore, this group within CJ had been taking care of the intermediate communication between actors at the field and the MSI and joined the creation of the Josaphat'Aire nonprofit.

CJ still leaves its traces within the self-proclaimed transitional use of Josaphat, yet has lost a lot of its dynamic in the last year. Today (June 2018) CJ still interacts with the occupation of the Josaphat site and support the commons-oriented goals within the on-going negotiation considering a convention between the MSI and the biodiversity of communities active on Josaphat's southwest corner.

With these three lines of flight, the core trajectory of CJ has continued to facilitate the cross-pollination of these different trajectories and invested in lobby work. Several meetings have taken place with the MSI to present the on-going progress since the publication of their "*Josaphat en commun*" proposal; looking to create a window of opportunity to implement the *ilot modèle* or to support the unasked for transitional uses to obtain formal recognition. However, the core team of **CJ is currently in a standby mode**, and although many of the active members are still engaged one way or another in the Brussels commons scene, the future of the platform itself is uncertain.

The work of CJ –in its different lines of flight- has been highly influential for Josaphat's

44 A promise that has been –again vaguely- repeated during the public presentation of the RPA/PAD of Josaphat in June 2018 (Perspective, 2018a).

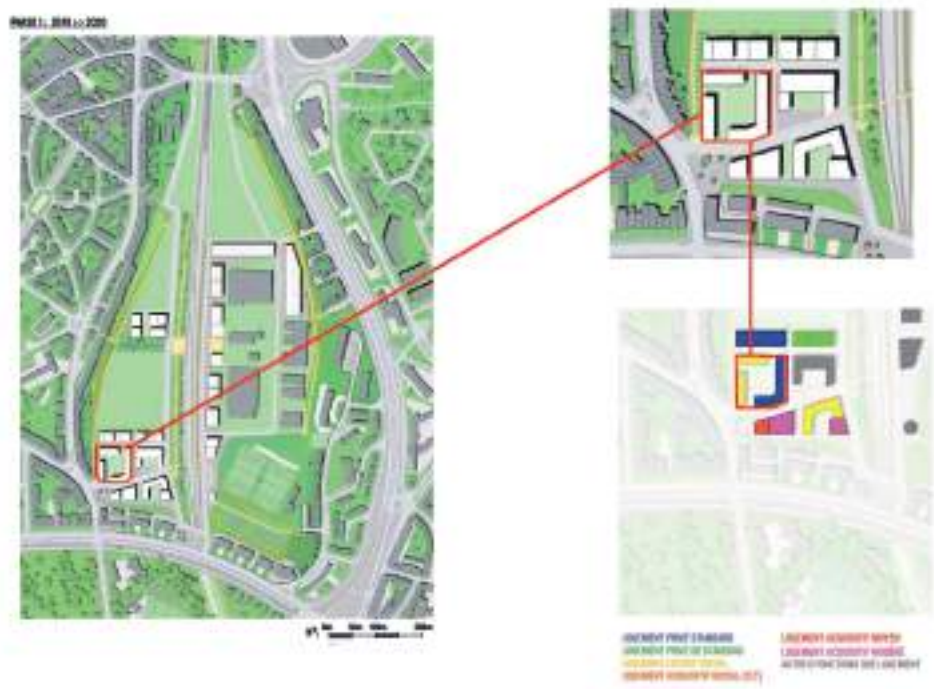
45 See REC.2015.12.03 "A framework for transitional use".

46 Supported by the King Baudouin Foundation – Urban Innovation Lab.



00.03.fig. 9 –Two of the photos of the exposition by Paula Bouffieux, June 2016.

Choix de l'emplacement du quartier pilote



00.03.fig. 10 –Presentation of the chosen location for CJ's îlot modèle, August 2016. Scheme by Commons Josaphat based on the plans by MS-a as publicly presented in December 2015.

identity<sup>47</sup> and the doctoral research and design practice. More particularly the third line of flight -focusing on the transitional use of Josaphat's ground- had been the main trajectory in which the Incubators living lab encroached. Both as researcher and citizen I have joined the CJ community and developed a role as active –at certain moments even leading- participant. As I gradually got feet on the ground, this civic research lead by CJ would merge with the academic ambitions of this doctorate. As such, Josaphat as a commons lab entails **an extended civic research**.

#### d. A site of action

A share of the commons lab claim on Josaphat impacts through **self-proclaimed transitional uses** of its ground. Commons Josaphat had a significant impact in this, though the scope of agents active in Josaphat's temporary use reaches beyond this CJ platform. Beginning 2015 –after the noise made by CJ's call for ideas- the first lasting intervention on Josaphat, being a nomadic garden, had been installed. The Jardin Latinis was the first initiative to act Josaphat's potential as a site for self-organized urban experimentation within its everyday being. Later on, many more initiatives have joined.

This multiplicity of community-initiatives –in addition to the Incubators' academic living lab and the extended commons lab- approach Josaphat as a site of action for experimentation within self-proclaimed transitional use. These micro-interventions and practices are at the focus of the doctoral research and design practice. These transitional uses partially make up the Incubators living lab and are also enactments of the commons lab. Though, they also stand on their own. Each initiative of transitional use, with its specific community has its own stance and way of being and becoming.

Toward the end of 2015, beginning 2016 a shared framework for Josaphat's transitional use is developed<sup>48</sup>. Leading to the creation of the booklet "*Utilisation transitoire, vers Josaphat en commun*", five key principles are articulated to construct a shared vision. These principles are seemingly evident, though they tend to be easily overlooked, hence their explicit articulation. In July 2016, the booklet was presented on-site in the context of the FESTIVAL de la friche, after which it found integration in the charter of the Jardin Latinis community garden and the bylaws of the Josaph'Aire nonprofit. In this document Josaphat –as a site of action- is claimed to have five intractable identities (see 00.03.fig.12).

° A natural environment; respect for nature stands central. Ecological and landscape-based values are main concerns and nature should maintain a key role in everyday life on and around Josaphat and the micro-interventions that are constructed for it.

° A common and integrated space; Josaphat is not an island and stands in relation to its surroundings, including the local inhabitants. The use of Josaphat aims to be inclusive, not only physically accessible but also so in a social sense. The collective

47 This can be illustrated by the general confusion of many Brussels citizens assuming Josaphat is the territory of Commons Josaphat. In addition people often ask us –as CJ or as on-site agents- for our permission to use the site as well as we have been numerous times asked to present our vision and work concerning Josaphat. Even the MSI recognizes there is a potential in implementing the *ilot modèle* for Josaphat's second development phase. And the current temporary use activities are promised to might integrate in the planned "Sporpark" of Josaphat –albeit on their terms. In addition the vision on health seems an evidence to the MSI, yet its actual application is still needs to be proven. After all I myself as part of the Brussels Incubators team had informed the choice to work on Josaphat based on the commons claim with which CJ had marked this site.

48 See REC.2015.12.03 "A framework for transitional use".

–commons– aspect is a priority, yet should leave space to the individual to find his or her space and grow within it.

° A laboratory, a workshop space; transitional use offers incredible opportunities for experimentations and socio-spatial innovation. These are linked to the imaginations and aspirations for the future of the city. As such Josaphat is to be seen as an incubator to allow for process-oriented development. Its transitional use comprises an “open construction site” (Bouchain & Julienne, 2010) where shared forms of governance and caretaking are at place.

° Circular and transitional use; the activities on Josaphat connect the everyday with the stakes of the future and in this sense consist of a transitional nature. Relational values that are implemented now are to be integrated in the future neighborhood “en bien commun”. The development of the city is an incremental process that starts with the uses today. Circularity then is linked to re-use and cradle-to-cradle thinking, not only in vision but also in used materials and the nature of the uAD interventions.

° An atmosphere of serenity and conviviality<sup>49</sup>; Josaphat offers a sense of serenity which we value. The experience of trust and safeness needs to be safeguarded through social connections rather than technological means –such as cameras. Everyone should be encouraged to feel comfortable and respected, both people and nature. To achieve this co-governance is crucial.

In this collectively written charter, Josaphat’s site of action is claimed as **a civic laboratory for experimentation and social innovation**. An identity that relates to its position within the Incubators research and its commons-oriented claim. Josaphat shows to be much more than that. Apart from a living lab, the site is also a place for commoning, nature, circular thinking, and well-being.

CJ has an essential stake in building Josaphat’s identity as a site of action. However, this civic platform is but one actor. CJ in 2015-2016 facilitated the co-creation of the charter with its five key principles and as such supported the community-initiatives at Josaphat to find their common denominators. Today, however, CJ’s agency is fading –yet still very present in inexplicit ways. Since its founding in April 2017, the Josaph’Aire (JA) nonprofit took over most of the strategic and facilitating work. JA provides a framework from which to continue the commons trajectory. As on-site interventions and their respective communities keep on increasing and growing, Josaph’Aire provides an institutional body to assemble and foster this ever-moving dynamic of on-site agencies<sup>50</sup>. JA entails an ambiguous position as its juridical identity is questioned as the nonprofit offers recognition for the whole of transitional uses on Josaphat.

Josaph’Aire as an entity is currently facing strong pressure as the nonprofit is forming the spill in the negotiations with the MSI considering a convention to legalize the temporary use of Josaphat. Moreover, in the everyday reality of Josaphat’s transitional use, JA is also challenged by the local agents as the creation of the nonprofit somehow felt forced. These tensions challenge JA to engage in a never-ending balancing act<sup>51</sup> that

49 My personal favorite.

50 This ambition is to assemble Josaphat’s self-proclaimed transitional uses is an on-going exercise that most likely will fall or stand with the outcome concerning the convention for temporary use. However it is important to address Josaph’Aire does not include all the on-site agents, nor does this entity aim to do so.

51 See the discussion concerning the balancing act between legitimacy and efficiency in section 00.07.03.c “Commoning governance” and the paper on “(How) can you plan an urban commons?” (Van Reusel, De Clerck, Pak, & Verbeke, 2015) included in section 00.10.06 it refers to.



echoes within the doctoral research and design practice; meandering between efficiency and legitimacy, scaling between ideology and practice, at the interval between public and civic, juggling institutionalization and autonomy.

The young Josaph'Aire entity is a messy creature. It in a way continues the founding work of CJ, yet without the loaded and theoretical heaviness it bears and which for the local actors grew into a frustration. The commons legacy has not been wholly shaken off, yet has loosened and made space for a more pluralistic and fragmented visioning process within the everyday reality on the field. JA as an assembly of Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional uses is also an implementation and a reconsideration of Josaphat as a commons lab. Entangled with this doctoral research and design practice, **Josaphat as a site of action lives its own life**. A life that is sometimes so anchored in the everyday, that it can bypass Josaphat's identity as both an academic and civic research lab. Continuing on the waves of on-site actions, everyday realities, activism, co-creation in research, participation in urbanism, and everyday liveliness the diverse transitional uses are relentlessly tracking their own path in the muddy landscape of Josaphat.

#### e. Living labbing at large

Josaphat's ground shows to serve **multiple and entangled identities** as an academic living lab (Incubators), and extended civic lab (CJ) and a site of action (Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use). These identities have been discussed independently in this section but are in reality intractably entangled. They strengthen and challenge each other.

To start with, Josaphat provides the ground for an **academic living lab method**. For Incubators of Public Spaces the site supports, informs and questions this European research project. It is at Josaphat that the ambition to facilitate urban (re)generation through the facilitation of micro-interventions in public spaces landed for the Brussels case. Incubators' ambition for PPP+P governance in this mainly triggered interaction with the pioneering work of already present civic agents such as Commons Josaphat that put Josaphat on the agenda for civic-public negotiations considering its planned urban development.

Commons Josaphat as civic platform established a commons claim on Josaphat's ground. Approaching Josaphat as a place of potential and a scene for political debate concerning uAD in Brussels, CJ has advocated Josaphat to carry the aptitude of a commons-oriented future for the city. The work of this self-organized civic platform puts Josaphat on the (international) map as **a commons lab** to negotiate how urban development could / should take place.

CJ's agency advocating Josaphat as an urban asset "en bien commun" establishes Josaphat as an on-going civic research lab. One that extends beyond Josaphat's ground in manifold ways. The dissemination of the collective proposal has bypassed the territory of Josaphat and even Brussels and Belgium. Presentations but also lobbying and interdisciplinary collaborations made this civic research break beyond the scope of Josaphat.

The commons lab's **civic research extended** in three lines of flight concentrating around health (santé), a model building block (ilot modèle) and the occupation of Josaphat's ground (occup'action). These trajectories can be seen as three interlinked spin-offs that build effect on and around Josaphat as they move away from its strict

perimeter. Out of the three, the last line of flight evolving around the self-proclaimed transitional uses of Josaphat most strongly resonates with the doctoral research and design practice. It is mainly the assemblage of transitional use interventions that is at the focus here. This assemblage of interventions brands Josaphat as a site of action and by this stretches beyond the living lab framework and commons lab ambition. Josaphat, after all, is a place that is lived in the everyday.

The uses of Josaphat's southwest corner host a plurality of initiatives, each developing their community-oriented initiative. These civic agents articulate multiple approaches to Josaphat. As **a site of action**, Josaphat does not only hosts a laboratory. The site is also recognized as a natural area and an open space integrated into its urban surroundings. Josaphat in its transitional use is positioned in-between what is and what could be. Its liveness is one of the everyday, founded on social cohesion and conviviality. Its being is also one that is embedded in another timing; a circular one. Thriving of its awaiting condition, Josaphat transits its being along the seasons. Its mood moves from heartily welcoming in summer to cold indifference during winter while years pass by.

Its ground: its being, its planned future and its current state of affairs, together form **its air**. An air that is jointly made up by Incubators' interest in its as an academic living lab (researching to support participation in urbanism), by Commons Josaphat's claim for it as civic laboratory (to envision and experiment urban commons) extending beyond its perimeter (through different lines of flight), and the by Josaph'Aire represented agents that occupy it as a site of action (to live its potential, the laboratory beyond). An air in which this doctoral research and design practice breaths. As **a living lab at large**, Josaphat's ground provides the air for many-layered interests, emergent themes, and matters of concerns.

**Josaphat is like a womb**, in expectation of something novel and vibrant, something that is already growing within its protecting "wand" today. The site embodies a process of caring and nurturing. What Josaphat will deliver is still a surprise.







00.03.fig. 12 –The cover of the proposal for a framework for Josaphat's transitional use, July 2016.



00.03.fig. 13 –The map as part of the midterm report, February 2017.  
The polaroids of the midterm report representing the “we” of CJ and RK, April 2017.



I exhibit my midterm report that comes in the form of a souvenir box. Pursuing the metaphor of design as an exploratory journey, I have spread out the map that brings together the emerging themes on a large table (see 00.03.fig.13). On the side walls, I have hung the letters, polaroid images, travel logbook and timeline that come with the map.

I welcome my audience on an early Sunday morning and invite them to travel along with me. I guide them along one of the routes in which to read the midterm report; the route that narrates the entangled “I” and “we” of the doctoral research and design practice.

*“So about “we”... There is one letter written to us. In which the multiple “we’s” are addressed that are at stake in this practice and this research. So what about us? The subject of this work is the first person plural. I cannot say that all of this here is “my” work. It is “ours”. So in this “us” different identities emerge. “We”, the architects. “We”, the people who work on-site and in Brussels. “We”, Brussels activists. “We”, who dream. And “we”, who question what is currently going on in city planning. “We”, who see an alternative and believe we can make something different.*

*On the map, I made a representation of these different “we’s”; collectives and groups that are emerging at the field.*

*There is “we”, who is the collective of Commons Josaphat. “We”, who see a different future for the Josaphat site that is currently being planned by the Region to be developed into a new sustainable neighborhood. And “we”, who believe in the principles of the commons in a way to propose an alternative that is more human-oriented.*

*There is “we”, the Recup’Kitchen team. A project that we crowdfunded to set up a mobile kitchen that works with food leftovers. A project that for us is a statement about how people could eat more sustainably. And which shows that a good and healthy meal can bring people together in a public space; questioning the city.*

*There is also “we”, the gardeners. Who engage in an everyday activity in order to relate to nature in the middle of the city. There is the “we”, that looks for connections further on in Schaarbeek in Brussels and who set up ateliers to dream together.*

*So there is the “we”, of the Maison des Possibles. Which is merging different “we’s” in a more entangled, bigger “we”. The Maison des Possibles is a project -may be more a concept or idea- that is bringing together different ambitions of different collectives. It is different desires. However, it is also a project that aims to bring these together in order to strengthen them. There is a “we”, that sits together and discusses what a Maison des Possibles could be like. There is “we” who see this project as a way to build a physical structure together that can provide shelter for the different collectives that are present on-site. There is “we”, who need a greenhouse to nurture and to grow our work. There is also “we”, that believes that one person -with recuperated materials- can build a minimal house and as such gain civic autonomy.*

*So we dream. And we imagine.”*

Toha -my colleague from BRAL- and I have invited some diverse experts in the still open structure of the Maison des Possibles. At Josaphat's ground, we welcome our guests. We ask them to help us select the submitted ideas for micro-interventions in temporary use of Josaphat that we have collected through the Incubators digital platform.

The harvest of ideas has not been spectacular. However, the gathering of this group of people, each with their relevant expertise considering Josaphat -in the neighborhood, in architecture, in temporary use, in research, working for administrations...- shows to be highly enriching.

Seated within Josaphat's reality and its different self-proclaimed transitional uses, we enjoy a late summer day. The workshop session Toha and I organize here is one of the concluding events of the Incubators research and its Brussels living lab. For Josaphat and its everyday reality, this discussion might seem to have no direct impact. Though, as a researcher I see the value in bringing diverse experts together, to build networks and to cross the ad hoc of the everyday with the long-term and broader image considering uAD.

It is early evening, the sun is still out, and we enjoy to be in the open air under the sheltering roof of the Maison. We nourish our guests with pizza and some drinks — a typical Josaphat meeting. The prints of the Incubators ideas fly from the table as the September wind hits us. *"The atmosphere of the site,"* I apologize. *"Very convivial..."* is jokingly replied.

This combined group of experts entails the jury that is part of the selection procedure –together with popular voting online- to decide which ideas will be granted the first three places and get exhibited at the Josaphat site. For Toha and I this exercise is more a mock-up, to explore the platform's functioning, to study the models of governance behind. The jury is critical of their role. *"Who are we to decide which idea gets to be appreciated the most? Doesn't it matter if these participants are willing to realize them? To invest time and energy. And if so, who are we to select what is desired and what is not?"*

*"Say, we are one year further, and the MSI/SAU would adopt this Incubators crowdsourcing method; based on which criteria will the selection be made? The choice of the jury or the votes of the people?"*

We get more questions than answers from this jury session. Questions that point at something more important underneath. It seems to come all back to governance and shared decision-making. Once again. Crowdsourcing ideas show to be more than talking about the what of the proposed. There is a need to look for the story; what, by whom, why and how.

## 00.03.03 Design-based participatory action research

In the previous two sections I have introduced Josaphat's ground (00.03.01) and its role as a living lab at large (00.03.02). From this base, I will now introduce the methods that I have implemented within this doctoral research and design practice (00.03.03). I will discuss the implemented method of (e) design-based participatory action research. Therefore I will first describe (a) participatory action research as it is established in the social sciences. After which I will add a reflection on how the (b) research by design approach has altered the implementation of action research on Josaphat's ground. In addition, I discuss some of the specific supporting methods that have supported me to make the tacit knowledge explicit.

### a. Participatory action research

**Action research** as an academic method has roots in the social sciences. In the "Handbook of Action Research" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) the method is defined as following: *"Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities."*

This action-oriented method is characterized according to three fundamental aspects. Waterman et al. (Waterman, Tillen, Dickson, & De Koning, 2001) discuss two of them: the cyclic process and research partnership. Reason and Bradbury (2011) add on a third being the orientation for change.

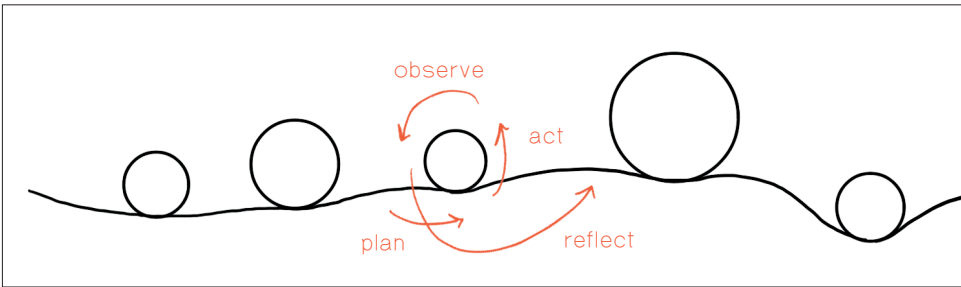
The first aspect, the cyclic process, addresses the movement between different series of action that comprise search, discovery, recognition and evaluation. The structure of this method supports a systematic study through its evolving cycles (see 00.03.fig.14).

The second aspect of partnership addresses the participatory potential of action research to include and support a wide range of participants within the action and research. This reveals an emancipatory ambition to enlarge the competences of the involved actors.

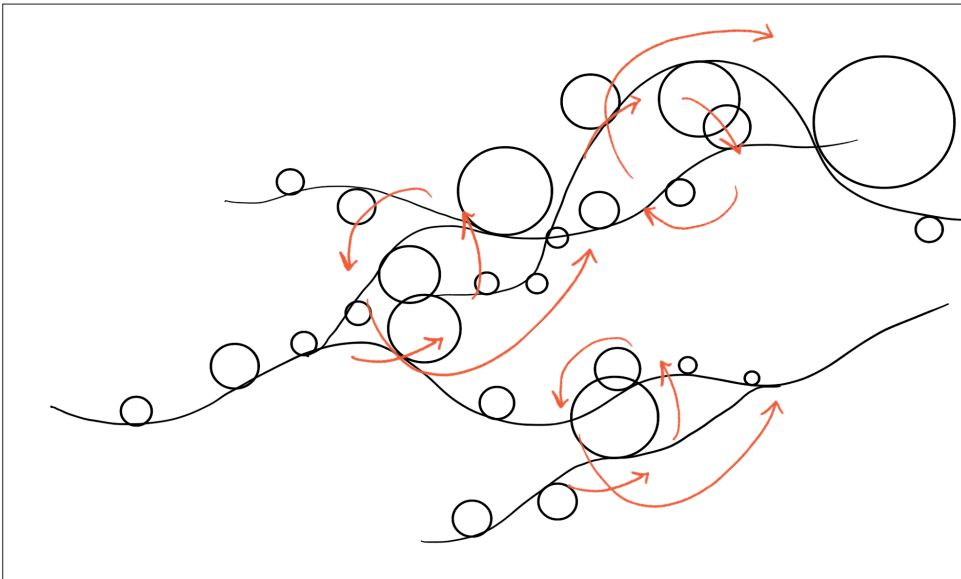
In addition to these two aspects, action research is approached as a tool for change. The statement is made that: *"Action research nearly always starts with a question of the kind, 'how can we improve the situation?'"* (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 11).

**Participatory action research** emphasizes the participatory facet of the method as established in social and environmental sciences. It demonstrates a collaborative nature of the relation between the researcher and the "researched" (Kendon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). Emphasizing the political value in overcoming the traditional hierarchy between researcher and participant, this specific method brings in a dimension of empowerment in the collective search to establish change through a cyclic process of actions (Reason & Bradbury, 2005; Wadsworth, 1988).

This aim for empowerment and the objective to establish transformation repoliticize participation (Fals-Borda, 2006). However, it also requires a critical awareness on how this ambition for more equal power relations in knowledge production can easily rein-



00.03.fig.14 - An illustration of the cyclic action research process according to Kemmis, Mc Taggart and Retallic (2013).



00.03.fig.15 - An illustration of a notebook sketch that represents design-based participatory action research as an entangled knot of lines, January 2018.

force inequality. The intention to achieve more “flexible and socially owned” processes of academic production need to be safeguarded throughout the process (Kindon et al., 2007: Introduction).

Participatory action research draws from existing capabilities and assets in order to set up relevant action. This is significantly different to action research as Lewin (1946) has defined it; being a research process in which practical actions are set up to develop and / or test a theory. In participatory action research, researchers and participants together outline the next steps to take (Kindon et al., 2007: Participatory action research: origins, approaches and methods).

In its societal and environmental science context, participatory action research acknowledges the importance of space as it is strongly influential to social life and crucial to participation (Kindon et al., 2007). This reveals a strong relation to the field of urban architectural design in which urban architecture is perceived as a social architecture that aims to impact on the urban community. The architect acts as go-between for spatial and social issues (KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2012).

Another relevant aspect of participatory action research, are the alternative modes of representations through which it acts. Acknowledging and nurturing the value of academic reflection, researchers explore to make academic knowledge production less verbose and impenetrable (Kindon et al., 2007). This aspect also relates to the field of urban architectural design where drawings, schemes, models, and 1:1 scale interventions are a crucial form of communication, expression and articulation.

Moreover, the local and situated field of intervention of participatory action research is not limited to the local scale but also connects to the “*global, regional, national, household and personal*” (Kindon et al., 2007: Introduction). A similar scaled approach is present in urban architectural design; in the uAD context, working on different scales is an inherent part of the practice (KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2012).

A final particularity of participatory action research is the approach to knowledge production as a collective and participatory activity. The method acknowledges that a plurality of “knowledges” are built that emerge in different institutions and locations (Kindon et al., 2007). Furthermore, practical knowing is put up front in a worldview that brings action and reflection, and theory and practice together (Reason & Bradbury, 2005). For McTaggart (1994), participatory action research starts from a feeling of concern and a desire to act in order to improve a situation. In relation to the field of architecture, Katoppo and Sudradjat (2015, p. 121) stress participatory action research is “*based on exploration and objectification of experience and the disciplining of subjectivity*”.

In the framework of this doctoral thesis I value the acknowledgment of a **plurality of knowledges**, and accordingly, I will emphasize the importance of experience and “feeling of concern”. I, therefore relate to Haraway’s (1988) feminist perspective on objectivity that undermines the “inside-outside boundaries” in knowledge. She claims all knowledge production is embodied and motivates that a situated objectivity is to be found in the explicit making of the researcher’s positioning, translation and convergence of knowledge. According to this standpoint, I will refer to “**lived experiences**” when addressing the type of embodied and strongly sensed knowledge that is obtained through the implementation of participatory action research. With the concept of lived experiences, I aim to acknowledge the valuable insights and findings that are derived from the more emotional and sense-based learnings, which can only be obtained by an insider perspective. To articulate these experiences, to disseminate them and to offer them a



place within the written account of the doctorate, I have included reconstructions of lived experiences (REC) as a complimentary narration to the foundational discussion (00).

## b. Research by design approach

The method of participatory action research is implemented **within the field of uAD**, in which the doctoral dissertation is situated. UAD has a strong connection to both the theoretical and practical domain of architecture in its approach as a spatial interpretation of social issues (KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2012). Perceiving architecture as a social situation, furthermore is recognized to be inherently participatory and empowering (Katoppo & Sudradjat, 2015). There is a clear overlap with how participatory action research is positioned as a method within the social sciences; however, the design-oriented context of the doctorate has an impact on the implementation of the participatory action research method.

I will first describe the design-oriented research approach that underpins this doctoral research and design practice. Subsequently, I will reveal the common ground that connects the field of uAD to the method of participatory action research. Hereafter, I will discuss the crucial differences that have triggered certain adaptations of the participatory action research within this design-oriented context. To conclude, I will discuss the type of knowledge this specific implementation of what I will call “design-based participatory action research” has resulted into.

The uAD field in which the doctorate is situated, takes on a **research by design approach**—in Dutch “ontwerpend onderzoek”. Design is implemented as a way to obtain and develop insights, understandings and knowledge. The method is applied in architectural, urbanistic and artistic research, as well as it is commonly used in practice and education (Pak, 2017; KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2018; Verbeke, 2013). This method informs the design outcome and builds the underlying research; design then becomes an instrument “*to reflect on the spatial impact of social issues*” (KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2012).

Research by design is established as an academic method that, in the words of Johan Verbeke (2013, p. 157): “*is not about analytical thinking in the narrow sense, but rather about exploration – that is searching, searching and searching again to find new insights and aspects of architecture. It is about extending horizons, changing borders, stimulating curiosity and exploration.*”

In addition to the above described dissociative and exploratory approach, research by design –in the context of this doctorate- entails two more crucial assets. The method is recognized as a way to ask the right question founded through a design-oriented study of the socio-spatial reality (Borret, 2016). Moreover, there is a strong speculative aspect that makes research by design “*is about imagining, visualizing and projecting alternative worldviews, as well as developing spatial understanding and making possible future worlds – and thus also contributing to the understanding of underlying processes of the present*” Verbeke (2013, p. 157).

The doctoral research and design practice is grounded in a research by design approach in which design is seen as a vehicle to develop insights. The **implementation of participatory action research in this context** is claimed to be a relevant method to

enrich architectural research, in which architecture is approached both as knowledge and practice (Katoppo & Sudradjat, 2015; Swann, 2002).

The three key aspects of action research that I have discussed in the previous section can be retraced in the doctoral research and design practice. The first aspect that focuses on the cyclic follow up of actions resulted in design actions that consist of micro-interventions in transitional use, negotiation processes, presentation activities, the organization of workshops and more. Within their continuous and serendipitous emergence, these concrete design actions align with moments of observation, reflection and planning that are conducted throughout the process. As second aspect, the partnership ambition and the strong participatory approach is also represented in Josaphat's living lab at large in which civic agents and their practices are not only included in the research, but make up the very ground on which the doctoral research and design practice is founded. As third aspect, the aim for change resonates with the speculative ambitions of the research by design method. There is a shared ambition to change certain conventional practices and to investigate options for other ways of doing.

More particularly, several of the characteristics of participatory action research align with the design attitude. To start, the political value of participation and its ambition to support empowerment resonates with the design approach that has been conducted within the doctoral research and design practice. Moreover, the need to have a flexible and more socially owned process and the objective to start from existing assets and capacities are represented in the design practice that has developed around Josaphat's ground. The research by design stance resonates with the participatory action research method in its recognition of the importance of space and the exploration for alternatives modes of representations. Furthermore, the relation of the local scale of the research to other levels going from the global to the personal, is also a relevant concern for the uAD practice.

The relation between participatory action research and research by design in the field of uAD shows to be very strong, nevertheless it had been a challenge to combine these methods. There are several **particularities that differentiate the, in a design context realized, implementation of participatory action research** from how the method is applied in the context of social sciences. In the field of design Swann (2002) claims the method needs to leave enough space to unfold an intuitive process.

While bringing participatory action research and research by design together, the social science approach conflicted with the intuitive design approach. This resulted in certain limits. Mainly the structuring of actions in consecutive cycles that follow a fixed planning, acting, observing and reflecting sequence (see 00.03.fig.14), shows to be restraining. The numerous design and research interventions on and around Josaphat occur at such an intensity that make it impossible to maintain this framework. In a design practice the layered and fast moving reality urges for a more ad hoc and intuitive approach. RInstead of visualizing the research process as a cyclic and consecutive series of action cycles, I would propose to outline the process by an entangled knot of lines of action research (see 00.03.fig.15). These lines connect to certain design projects that grow, maybe stop at a certain point, merge with others and are interwoven or intersect with one another.

In addition the research by design interventions cannot be narrowed down to delimited action cycles as it is framed within the social sciences approach. Even though the conventional action research framework acknowledges the reality is more complex, re-

search by design approach add on to this as it entails strategic maneuvering, playing on different scales and levels, impulsive interventions. Moreover, everyday conversations and several documentations ( writings in the forms of reports, mails, subsidy applications and the like) make the concept of “action” highly hybrid. Too delimited and clear-cut action cycles conflict with the fast moving and diverse nature of the actions in a design practice.

Moreover, another specific particularity that emerged from the research by design context is the ongoing reformulation of the central research question. It is the very design practice that –as a research- provides the method to ask the right questions. Participatory action research already marks a shift away from a research approach that starts from a certain theory or hypothesis; however, this aspect is significantly stronger in research by design, where not only the assets and capacities that are present by also the conducted design practice inform the research question of the doctorate.

The outcome of the participatory action research, as it is conducted in the field of uAD, also leads to a different type of results. The knowledge contributions that emerge from the doctorate are more speculative and aim to offer a series of concepts –a performative vocabulary- that, apart from the change that is achieved within the living lab at large, also aim to change the broader discourse. This differs from the social science approach where the result is oriented to “*inform a theoretical understanding and the outcomes of social or environmental change*” (Kindon et al., 2007: Introduction)

In addition, the participatory aspect within the doctoral research and design practice is strongly present in the design practice, but the knowledge contribution that the doctorate aims at remains focused on the architectural discipline. Although the doctorate takes into account the political and social facets of the architectural discipline, its main contribution is still mainly oriented at the uAD scene. The implemented method alters from the participatory action research approach in which the reflection is oriented at the transformation of the social situation.

Combined, the methods of **participatory action research and research by design** provide the framework for the entangled doctoral research and design practice. As a living lab at large, Josaphat’s ground binds together the academic and civic, as well as it blurs the barriers between research, design and action.

I frame the collision of research by design and participatory action research as “**design-based participatory action research**”. This method offers an academic frame for the intuitive yet also rigorous design approach that entangle within the doctoral research and design practice.

As discussed in the previous section, I recognize the plurality of knowledges that are developed within this doctoral research and design practice. The importance of the embodied and strongly sensed knowledge that is obtained through participatory action research is referred to as “lived experiences”. In addition, I would like to emphasize the tacit knowledge that is obtained through a research by design approach for which I will use the concept of “designerly ways of knowing”. Cross (2001) refers to this notion to recognize the particular relation of design and science. Where the latter is analytic, design is constructive and focuses more on how things ought to be. Designing as an academic method is not to be repeatable. Moreover, designerly ways of knowing is by Newton (2011) related to research in the field of architecture, for which she claims it is “*embedded in the social world at large and that has its impact in the social realm*”.

Through the written account of the doctoral research and design practice, I aim to

make these designerly ways of knowing explicit. Moreover, I implement different forms of representations that emphasize the different type of “knowledges” that are obtained. Complimentary to this book, the timeline (TL) provides a visual resource to bring out the designerly ways of knowing in an accessible manner.

### c. Supporting methods

As part of the design-based participatory action research several supporting methods have been implemented to make the tacit knowledge explicit. Both the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing have been captured and processed through the use of auto-ethnographic notations, coding and categorizing, and the use of personas.

The use of **auto-ethnographic notations** has been implemented as a technique to support the design-based participatory action research. The link to the field of auto-ethnographic research can be found in my insider position as architect and researcher. In auto-ethnographic research, anthropologists study their own cultural group or setting. The result is an intensive participant observation study in which the researcher is a participant herself.

As the design-based participatory action research implies the researcher is immersed in the practice and through that also becomes the subject of the research, auto-ethnography has provided useful methods and techniques “*for field research in familiar everyday settings*” (Tetnowski & Damico, 2014). More precisely, an auto-ethnographic approach has supported me to recognize and reflect upon the knowledge that is present in the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing. It is important for the researcher to acknowledge her own view and interpretations and to express these openly. A “sympathetic introspection” (Reed-Danahay, 1997) is at place.

In relation to this auto-ethnographic approach, it is crucial to recognize the researcher’s limit to only produce “*partial, located and critical knowledges*” as claimed by Donna Haraway (1988, p. 584) in her paper on “Situated Knowledges”. With her concept of “situated knowledges”, Haraway acknowledges the multiplicity of knowledge as she advocates a feminist version of objectivity that positions rational knowledge as “*process of on-going critical interpretation*” (Haraway, 1988, p. 590). In her recognition of the embodied nature of knowledge production, Haraway claims the researcher is accountable and responsible for the translation and linking of the many voices that took part in this process. This aspect of auto-ethnography resonates with the method of design-based participatory action research.

Auto-ethnographic research and the recognition of situated knowledges values the insider perspective. The more personal view on the studied phenomena is perceived to contribute to a specific knowledge and objectivity that is not merely subjective, but which opens a door to look beyond (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

An additional and more recent aspect of auto-ethnography is the blurring of the boundaries between qualitative research and story writing. This relates to participatory action research that explores alternative ways of knowledge representation. It moreover also connects to research by design where the use of different means of expression is a common practice. The different forms of output of this doctoral research and design practice as described in section 00.02.02 “*Reader’s guide*” is inherent to the method of design-based participatory action research.

This auto-ethnographic research approach has found expression in the form of architectural notebooks that I have been keeping throughout the research (see 00.03.fig.16, 10 & 11). Since –even before– the start of the doctoral research I have been making annotations in a dozen notebooks. With chronology as their only leading structure, these books have been filled with observations, reflections, inspirational references, literature summaries, meeting notes, memos from presentations, drawings, schemes, agenda's, design sketches, presentation preparations, interview notes, et cetera. In this form, my auto-ethnographic notations have supported the reflection on the knowledge within the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing.

Throughout the four years of this design-based participatory action research I have kept these auto-ethnographic notations meticulously and allowed my personal reflections as well as those of others to crystallize in these notes in the form of schemes, writings, drawings, et cetera. In this final stage of the dissertation, these notebooks serve as fundamental part of the rich data. They help to recall lived-through emotions, obtained insights, upcoming questions and emerging themes. Throughout the last two years, these notes –in their varying forms– have formed the ground from which to more structurally and precisely look back at the process of design-based participatory action research from my insider perspective. Reporting on the Josaphat experience and beyond, they were subject of a rigorous coding exercise.

This provides a lead to the second technique that has been implemented to support the explicit making of the obtained knowledge. In order to capture the situated knowledges embedded in the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing, I found inspiration in the supporting methods of **coding and categorizing**, derived from the constructivist grounded theory methodology.

In the context of design-based participatory action research, the interest in constructivist grounded theory is focused on the process of data processing. Kathy Charmaz (2014, p. 1) describes how the method “*begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis.*” This resonates with the “*searching, searching, and searching again*” of research by design (Verbeke, 2013). Another point of overlap can be found in constructivist grounded theory's approach to adapt and reformulate the research question based on the obtained data and the findings emerging from it. A similar approach, to not start from a certain hypothesis, is also common in research by design.

More precisely, it are constructivist grounded theory's techniques of coding and categorizing that have supported me in finding and analyzing the tacit knowledge that is built through design-based participatory action research. Similar to the implementation of the participatory action research method, I also have adapted these techniques –coming from a social science background– to the field of urban architectural design. The data from which to start the coding process in constructivist grounded theory is obtained through interviews; however the data derived through design-based participatory action research shows to be much more extensive. Starting from the architectural notebooks; drawings, sketches, personal notes, schemes, fragment from everyday conversations... make up the rich data from which to start the coding process.

The coding and categorizing strategies coming from constructivist grounded theory allow to take distance from the insider perspective –yet without disowning it– and accordingly allow to sweep over the broader landscape of obtained knowledges. The

coding and categorizing support a macro perspective and provide a framework to take up the responsibilities to acknowledge the translations that I, as researcher make, from the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing. Through the coding and categorizing process I can still acknowledge the many voices that are present in the research. Moreover the iterative processes that coding and categorizing require allowed me to grasp the tacit knowledge in order to make them explicit and articulate and disseminate them through the output of this dissertation.

The implementation of the coding and categorizing has been adapted according to the rich data of the architectural notebooks. The auto-ethnographic notations have served as the base for the coding. Starting this process in the summer of 2016, the notebooks had been ran through according to their chronological order. The notes, schemes, questions, learnings, literatures studies... were page by page reread, interpreted and coded. These codes were listed on lines of paper that than again were ordered according to the same timewise logic ((see 00.03.fig.18).

This resulted in an abundance of lists that revealed the emerging themes of the doctoral research and design practice ((see 00.03.fig.19). Furthermore, the coding process would trigger new insights, questions and thoughts, which were simultaneously reflected upon through memo-writing within the architectural notebook (see 00.03.fig.20). As such, the data within the notebooks kept extending throughout the process.

The lists of codes were processed into an exploratory map that had been drawn for the midterm report of the doctorate<sup>52</sup>. Representing the design process through the metaphor of an exploratory journey, emerging themes derived from the coding lists were mapped ((see 00.03.fig.20). In addition to the map, several letters would bring out a written reflection on the emerging insights.

Another phase of coding and categorizing brought the codes and map together. The codes got shuffled and reshuffled as they clustered over certain emerging themes. Throughout this process the main themes of the doctoral research and design practice got unraveled. They provided the content that would form the spine for the written reflection of the thesis.

As the design-based participatory action research is still continuing, the auto-ethnographic note-taking, as well as the coding and categorizing, are still ongoing and will bypass the writing up of the dissertation. The designerly ways of knowing and the lived experiences further expand and build situated knowledges as the living lab at large keeps on running. Accordingly, the discussion on the emergent themes of this doctoral research and design practice continue beyond what is captured in this book and its complimentary visual resources.

A third methodological technique that has been implemented within the design-based participatory action research method is the **use of personas**. In order to process and clearly articulate the situated knowledges that have been recognized and made explicit through the coding and categorizing process, I have developed several personas that represent and embody the obtained insights. As active agents, they support me in narrating the findings of the doctoral research and design practice.

The personas –such as “Modern Architect” and “Commons Architect.e”- , whom I will describe later in this book, emerged throughout the writing process. In developing and composing the foundational reflection (00) caricatures of architectural attitudes emerged. These caricatures personalize the architectural attitudes that reveal a specific

52 See REC.2017.04.17 “Presentation CA<sup>2</sup>RE conference Ghent: I / we”.



00.03.fig.16 - The auto-ethnographic notebooks of the doctoral research and design, June 2018.



00.03.fig.17 - An extract of the architect's notebooks.





00.03.fig.18 - A sample of the auto-ethnographic annotations.





00.03.fig.19 - Coding the architect's auto-ethnographic notebooks, August 2016.



00.03.fig.20 -Collecting the lists of codes, November 2017.



00.03.fig.21 - Memo-writing while mapping the collected codes for the midterm report, February 2017.

agency within the Brussels urban architectural design scene. Being an important part of the output of the doctoral research and design practice, the personas also entail a useful technique to keep the discussion focused within the field of uAD without denying the very present political and social agency entangled within it.

Different to the other concepts that I have used or created within this written account, the personas aim to personalize the positioning of the uAD field within broader societal tendencies –such as the ongoing neoliberalization and globalization. As agents that I create and direct on the theater of Josaphat's uAD, the personas dialogue with me as I am still defining them. They found their explicit becoming within this written reflection, yet I hope they have a performative effect and can, together with the other concepts that are proposed in this doctorate, contribute to the broader debate on how our city is being designed, created and (not) cared for.

In this chapter, I have introduced Josaphat as the ground of this doctoral research and design practice. I have described the site's being, its planned future and its current state of affairs. I have introduced Josaphat as the ground of this doctoral research and design practice. I have described the site's being, its planned future and its current state of affairs. I have described Josaphat as a living lab at large that, in the context of the Incubators of Public Spaces research project, consists of an academic living lab, while the agency of the civic platform Commons Josaphat has claimed Josaphat's ground as a civic research laboratory that extends beyond its strict perimeter. In addition, I have claimed that Josaphat also consists of a site of action for self-proclaimed transitional use, which values its ground to be more than a laboratory to experiment socio-spatial innovation; Josaphat also entails an everyday lived environment.

### 00.03.03 Design-based participatory action research

In the previous section, I have discussed the research method that is implemented. I have combined participatory action research with a research by design approach, which combines as design-based participatory action research. The lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing that are obtained through this method form situated knowledges (Haraway 1988). I have reflected on this tacit knowledge with the support of supporting methods that have assisted me to make this knowledge explicit. In relation to the implementation of auto-ethnographic notations, coding and categorizing, and the use of personas, I have been able to grasp the situated knowledges in order to make them explicit in this written account of the dissertation.

#### a. The architect-researcher

In the doctoral research and design practice that is grounded at Josaphat, I have found myself to stand as architect and researcher. The design-based participatory action research has allowed to forge an identity as “architect-researcher”. This architect-researcher obtains lived experiences through participatory action research and develops designerly ways of knowing through a research by design approach.

This identity is positioned in-between academic research and an uAD practice, and it doubles as both. The “researcher” embodies the reflective, more distant and rigorous side; the academic attitude. The “architect” stands as the practitioner who is urged to act ad hoc, to research through making. This role represents a more intuitive stance.

The architect-researcher consciously acts and implicitly learns as she builds situated knowledges; partial, located and critical. The architect-researcher looks to make these explicit as emergent themes in this written account, while she simultaneously advances the action and discussions on the field. As architect-researcher, I am both submerged and distant, I stand in the micro and I overlook the macro. As architect-research, I search, search and search again; I am still searching while I am writing up the learnings from the practice through the making of this book. As architect-research, I search in actions, design, reflections and words. I look for change through speculative design action, while I build my understanding.

As architect-researcher, I am in the blurry mess. I see boundaries fade; design and academia merge, practice and theory flirt. As architect-research, I aim to contribute to the debate by providing clever concepts that flirt with theory and make the consistency of the practice. I engage in speculative –proactive and inventive– ways of dealing with an theory from the standpoint of a practitioner. I orient at an altering approach to uAD in response to the emergent themes derived from the design-based participatory action research. As architect-researcher, I move away from a positivist ideation of objectivity. I cherish an interest to “*operate between, across and at the edge of disciplines*” (Rendell, 2016, p. 22).

Design-based participatory action research. Josaphat’s ground as a site of exchange for architectural research and academic practice. Practice and research entangle as continuously and interactively forming and coloring each other.

A doctoral research and design practice. A written account and visual resources. Dif-

ferent forms of output of a work that extends beyond the thesis and beyond Josaphat's ground. Different forms of output that show Josaphat's ground and grasp at its air.

Not more than a reach out to Josaphat's simmering air, in which I search. Search, search, and search again.

As architect-researcher, I stand with my feet on Josaphat's ground, with my head I am in her air.

## b. The commoners

On Josaphat's ground I stand as architect-researcher. Though, I equally fit a role as part of a "we" of commoners.

As architect-researcher at Josaphat's living lab at large, I am submerged. I am part of a collectivity and as part of this "we", I am engulfed by Josaphat's everyday liveliness. Our "we" is driven by the site's symbolic importance for our city, Brussels. "We" share an eagerness to build a commons lab. As "I" extend in "we", the doctoral research and design practice becomes absorbed by Josaphat as a commons lab and site of action.

At our Josaphat ground, "I" merges into "we". And as I became part of the commoners, the design-based participatory action research became ours. The doctoral research and design practice cannot be thought loose from our context. This context is made up by Josaphat's ground, where "we" envision and "we" act. At Josaphat's ground, I –as architect-researcher- and we –as the commoners- are situated in an entangled existence. Like the architect and the researcher, the "I" and the "we" blur. Our barriers tend to dissolve.

As commoners, we are part of and creators of Josaphat's being and becoming. We live this written account –even though its emergent themes are from "my" hand. We build Josaphat's content through our actions and projections, through our manifold layered discussions on Josaphat's ground.

As commoners, we share the uAD practice that is situated at Josaphat's ground. We share it as our commons lab and site of action. Moreover, I have attempted to also share the academic living lab. We share an entangled civic and academic practice and research that we –in our messy constellation- inspire, question, reformulate, rearrange, alter, care for, build, reposition..

As part of the commoners, my work becomes our work. At Josaphat's ground, we share lived experiences that I reconstruct. We share designerly ways of knowing that I aim to render explicit. Together we build situated knowledges that I articulate in this written account or express through visual resources.

However, if there is a "we", there is also a "they".

This "they" can be found in the several "we's", as "we" face internal oppositions. There is "we", the on-site do-ers against "they", the thinkers. "We", that try to unite one shared dynamic against "they", who prefer to walk their own path. "We", the citizens against "they", the academics. Just to say that "we" is fluid.

Moreover, there is also a "they" outside our "we's". "They", who plan Josaphat's future. "They", who tear apart Josaphat's identity today to envisage what it will become in the future. "They", who own Josaphat –MSI- in opposition to "we", the commoners who use Josaphat's land –Josaph'Aire. "They", the public developers in opposition to "we", the civic agents. "They", the top-down as they stand in opposition to "we", the bottom-up.

But also a “they” and “we” that are currently meeting around the table, negotiating a convention for temporary use.

And so, “they” and “we” make “we” again. “We” share an ambition to move away -or at least nuance- oppositional distinctions. This “we” is in tension, though, as we still search our common ground. “We” is more a challenge than an evidence. Just to say that “we” aims to reach beyond “they”.

As commoners we stand with our feet on Josaphat’s ground, with our heads we are in its air.

### c. The architect-writer

On Josaphat’s ground, I stand as architect-researcher, being part of a “we” of commoners. Though, there is another role I would like to add; the one of an architect-writer.

As architect-writer, I acknowledge this written account as part of the uAD practice. The architect and the writer find each other as academia and design / theory and practice blur. As architect-writer, I approach the (re)production of our story that is grounded on Josaphat and immersed in its everyday and lived uAD practice. As architect-writer, I aim to claim our narrative.

As architect-writer, I dive into the auto-ethnographic notes. As architect-writer, I find in these notebooks the broader narrative to reflect upon (00) and trace back souvenirs to help me recall lived experiences that I reconstruct (REC) in stories.

As architect-writer, I write as much in words as through visual output. I have written our story in numerous presentations, in papers, in articles, in videos, in Facebook pages. As architect writer, I visually compose our timeline (TL). I reproduces the doctoral design practice in a digital portfolio (P). And I express out narrative through a planned exhibition (EXPO).

As architect-writer, I have searched, searched and searched again for the right story line, the accurate words and the suited tone in order to share and disseminate my reading –as architect-researcher- of our situated knowledges –as we, the commoners. As architect-writer, I have playfully developed clever concepts that flirt with theory and assist me to make the consistency of the practice.

As architect-writer, I articulate, mold, form and design the narrative. As architect-writer, I welcome creativity and distortion. I embrace the speculative nature of research by design. As architect-writer, I constructs a narrative that forms and alters the doctoral research and design practice.

An architect-writer, I color our work through my articulation. I voice, reproduce and represent. I do so through my perspective –as insider. My narration binds together our shared work at Josaphat in a broader context through the connections I draw. Accordingly, I take up an active, leading role. My own insider perspective becomes central to / in / through the writing. I manifest my perspective, reading, interpretation and aspirations. I claim the narrative, I compose, sketch, design and assemble the research and the design practice through my words. As architect-writer, I take up a leading role; I set the theater scene, I direct the actors. However, once on stage, I act but as part of a “we”. In the practice -as architect-research- my role remains more humble; influential and leading, not decisive.

As architect-writer, I weave in my viewing point that –feet on Josaphat’s ground- aims to capture and explicate what is to be found in Josaphat’s air.

As architect-researcher, I stand with my feet on Josaphat’s ground, with my head I am in its air.

d. Here and now

To conclude, I want to provide a framing for this doctoral research and design practice. On Josaphat’s ground, I stand as architect-researcher and architect-writer, being part of a “we” of commoners. Entangled in a design-based participatory action research, these roles make up an uAD practice that should be understood as “*a process which occurs not only through the design of buildings but also through the activities of using, occupying and experiencing them, and through the mode of writing and imaging used to describe, analyze and interrogate them*” (Rendell, 2016, p. 23).

The architect-researcher, my agency as part of the commoners and the architect-writer are positioned in the field of urban architectural design, yet have a foot in the social sciences and a strong relation to feminist studies. The roots in the social sciences appears through the methods that I –in my different identities- have implemented and adapted. Not only the research method, but also the very attitude that underlies the design practice -which will be discussed in the following chapters- shows to have a strong affiliation to the social sciences .

In addition to this roots in the social sciences, the architect-researcher also has a strong connection to feminist studies. This finds expression in the feminist objectivity recognized through Haraway’s (1988) notion of situated knowledges as well as it finds resonance in the doctoral design practice that –as will be discussed in chapters 00.07 and 00.08- reveals to have a feminist undertone.

Moreover, the different knowledge representations that result in a written account and visual resources underpin a feminine approach that –building on Irigaray’s (1985) legacy- values emergence and difference. The doctoral research and design practice aims to, in its altering (Petrescu, 2007) agency, approach otherness as a strength.

The doctoral research and design practice –its being and becoming- are crystalized in the here and now of their articulation through this book. The different forms of output that I have created through my agency as architect-researcher, part of the commoners and architect-writer are positioned in a “here” (Rendell, 2016) that entails the place of writing. A “here” that stands in the “now” of this writing. This “now” is stretched over months of articulation, shuffling, repositioning and re-articulation. This “now” still continues and changes as the written account and visual resources gain form. However, this “now” also occurs in delay to the happenings on Josaphat’s ground, as writing entails a lengthy and cumbersome process. This “now” of the doctoral research and design practice is “here” frozen at June 2018. Although both the writing and reality have extended beyond already.

The “here” of this writing also entails Josaphat’s ground. It forms the starting point. Josaphat is a hidden pearl, moody, a strategic territory, of regional interest, an investment, claimed and so much more... its being provides the foundation of this doctoral research and design practice.



Josaphat's ground is made up by a living lab at large; an academic laboratory, a commons lab, an extended civic research, a site of action. The latter acknowledges Josaphat as lived in the everyday, values its condition as natural zone, defines it as a place for the transitional, for experimentation, for commoning. Josaphat is a place of togetherness, serenity, conviviality.

Josaphat's ground in this "here and now" stands as the foundation of the doctoral research and design practice, of its design-based participatory action research. It is the location from which to develop designerly ways of knowing, to build lived experiences.

In this "here and now" constellation, Josaphat's ground breaths its simmering air. A current of this air is articulated and created in the writing, this "here and now".

Before I further guide you through our story, I would like to emphasize that this – written and visual- articulation needs to be framed in the scope of the "here and now" that I define as architect-research and architect-writer. This scope entails what we have lived as commoners. The narrative that I will here outline from page to page is anchored at Josaphat's ground in its manifold identities, which I have aimed to unravel in this chapter. The emergent themes considering our shared practice, are to be framed as my analysis –as architect-researcher- of our agency –as commoners. These discussed emergent themes aim to grasp what I feel is simmering in Josaphat's air.

# 00.04

design practice

## HOUSE-GARDEN-AND- KITCHEN STORIES

*The (...) project is a sketch-like portrayal of a peasant kitchen transposed onto the present and possibly beyond. It manifests itself as a little house, a shack of sorts, the outer façade of which consists of a patchwork of various different materials. (...) It is a maximalism, which celebrates the kitchen as a place of congregation, which extols openness and tolerance as matters of principle and in return abandons the idea of a perfect order.*

- Mike Meiré (2007) on the FARM Project

In this chapter I will –feet on Josaphat’s ground, head in its air- focus on the doctoral design practice. I want to take you further along to Josaphat and what is at play on its ground. In the previous chapter 00.03, I have aimed to describe what makes up this ground (00.03.01) and how it became the location of a living lab at large (00.03.02) that blends academic and civic research, beyond its strict perimeter while also valuing Josaphat as a site of action. Besides, I have described the design-based participatory action research and complementary research methods (00.03.03) that are implemented in this doctoral research and design practice. All together this makes up the framework in which this dissertation and my work as an architect-researcher, commoner, and architect-writer (00.03.04) need to be regarded.

Here in this chapter, I aim to take you along to get to know “three plus one” urban architectural design (uAD) interventions happening on Josaphat’s ground. The tripartite is made up by “Recup’Kitchen” (00.04.02), the “Jardin Latinis” garden (00.04.03) and the “Maison des Possibles” (00.04.04), which is complemented with the rather invisible commoning represented through “Josaph’Aire” (00.04.05).

In the first section (00.04.01), I will claim that these house-garden-and-kitchen initiatives and their something more (c) that are all together situated in Josaphat’s air (a) can be considered as practices of urban commoning (b). In this setting, these uAD practices make up what I will conceptualize to be “commons architecture”.

## 00.04.01 Experiences of urban commoning

In this first section, I situate the doctoral design practice in Josaphat’s air (a). Discussing the concept of the commons and more particularly the urban commons as it underpins the work of the Commons Josaphat collective (b) I will claim that the “three plus one” uAD interventions that I discuss further in this chapter (00.04.02) take part in the broader urban commons movement.

### a. Being in Josaphat’s air

In the previous chapter 00.03 “*Feet on the ground*”, I have introduced Josaphat as the ground of the doctoral research and design practice. I evoked its position as temporary used urban land that awaits a future to host an entirely new district (00.03.01). I have described Josaphat as an interesting living lab for civic and academic research that extends beyond its physical barriers. Josaphat is defined to be an urban living lab at large (00.03.02).

Through the design-based participatory action research emerging on/through Josaphat, designerly ways of knowing and lived experiences come together in situated knowledges. Situated knowledges that build up an analysis and inform the emergent themes discussed in this written account (00.03.03).

Josaphat as the site is today, offers an interesting zone of tension between its planned future directed by the MSI, and its actual commons claim as advocated by the Commons Josaphat (CJ) platform. In this in-between, Josaphat finds identity as a site of

action. A ground at which several community-oriented initiatives created a place of urban experimentation; Josaphat as a living laboratory, integrated, circular, natural and serene (00.03.02.d).

In this chapter, I will focus on a couple of the self-proclaimed transitional uses that have emerged at Josaphat's fertile breeding ground. By reconstructing memories (REC) of several of these practices, I aim to bring out the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing underlying these uAD projects. Inexplicitly these accounts –narrated through my voice as architect-writer- aspire to welcome you –as the reader- in Josaphat's air. Feet grounded in the concrete experiences of urban commoning, head out in the simmering promises for an altering future for our city.

## b. Acting along the commons claim

As the **activist agency** of Commons Josaphat claimed Josaphat as a commons lab, their pioneering work has put Josaphat on the map. Their merit to launch an open call for ideas (April 2014) and their endeavor to translate these ideas into the solidly written proposal "*Josaphat en commun*" (Commons Josaphat, 2015b), published in September 2015, has inspired several citizens to get into action themselves. While the collectively written proposal was gaining form, a nomadic urban garden started to install a self-organized use on Josaphat's southwest corner. Also, the "picnic the commons" events (see 00.03.fig.11) were organized from April to September 2015 to invite and welcome those curious to explore Josaphat actively. From the winter of 2015 onward, bit by bit Josaphat's ground came to life. More initiatives would slowly follow and claim their place at Josaphat's southwest corner.

Today (summer 2018) a multitude of interrelated yet autonomous community-oriented initiatives act on Josaphat. Not all of them are directly inspired or influenced by the pioneering work of CJ, but in their shared actions I can read the traces of CJ's commons claim, if only –but not solely- through my agency that has been strongly inspired by CJ. I claim the majority of the self-proclaimed transitional activities on Josaphat **fit within the commons movement** and through this breath Josaphat's commons air.

The notion of the commons is described by Commons Josaphat (2017) in an accessible way that enthusiasms: "*Everywhere in the city people come together to experiment with new ways of community living. Food teams, cohousing projects, self-managed nurseries, community land trusts, community gardens, sustainable neighborhoods, LETS-communities, energy cooperatives, groups of people that consider alternatives and work on various themes such as water management, food production, money, labor, or software.*

*At first sight, these themes seem rather disconnected from each other, but we feel there is a connection. (...) These initiatives are developing alongside the market. They emphasize use rather than ownership, common ownership and sharing rather than individual property. They try to handle the limited resources of our planet with care, rather than assuming unlimited growth. They favor more solidarity to further polarization. They sometimes depend on the state, but develop in parallel, because they attach great importance to self-governance. Doing this they do not go against policy, but work together with it and deepen it.*

*We see the connections. We feel the potential. We see how the contours of a new society are being drawn. For about every area of daily life people, today are working on concrete alternatives. What if we succeeded in bringing all these alternatives together? Wouldn't*

*that strengthen our community potential to a significant extent? What if we would think together about how the city can be developed based on these principles?”*

The text illustrates the merit of CJ not only to recognize the value of existing commons initiatives but also to awaken the potential of connecting and interweaving them. The statement acknowledges the strength of the concrete cases that already exist and the more meta-reflection of what they all together could bring about. The vision of CJ holds the promise of an altered model –a new society-, one that has strong political agency. Commons Josaphat’s “**definition**” of the commons is not solely based on their knowledge of commons practices, but –less explicitly- is informed by an extensive literature<sup>1</sup> considering the topic. The way CJ presents the commons is based on this shared theoretical reading in which the commons are in general defined as the combination of three key elements:

(1) a common resource that can be tangible like land, water, and food or immaterial like knowledge and clean air. These non-commodified means are our collective wealth that concern us all –including future generations- and that thus require protection and know-how.

(2) commoners or communities that are involved in the production and reproduction of the common resources. The commons entails self-organized systems and relations that go beyond the conventional recognized public and private actors.

(3) a commoning practice; the institutions, rules that are involved in a new mode of (re)production. This underlying commons process emerges from another logic and generates (relational<sup>2</sup>) values that are often taken for granted. To prevent these to be jeopardized, the generative nature of commoning is put up front. This commoning is recognized as a core element of the commons as it emphasizes their bio-political (re) production. In the words of Peter Linebaugh, “there is no commons without commoning” (Bollier, 2014, p. 19).

The commons is about a pooled resource –the what (1)- as well as about the how (3) it is taken care of and by whom (2). Commons scholar David Bollier (2014) demonstrates the integrated relations and interdependence of these three aspects of the commons. In addition to this threefold definition, the commons also **stands for a movement**. Seeing the commons and actions of commoning as a world view; the commons also stand as a political movement, which promises a transition to move away from the market-state dichotomy.

To better understand this definition and the commons claim on Josaphat, it is essential to comprehend that **the commons are not a new concept**. They have a strong history tracing back to precapitalist times in England. Traditional commons like woods and fisheries –natural resources- were a common practice before they became enclosed. English commoners provided, protected and maintained the matters of their life on their own. A village community collectively took up the stewardship of grassland, which provided their sheep with food. Before the industrialization process the right to use the

1 The literature concerning the (urban) commons that I am familiar with and on which I base my arguments are: Asociata Komunitas, Tirca, Axinte and Borcan (2015), Bader and Liesgang (2014), Bauwens and Onzia (2017), Bollier (Bollier, 2014, 2016a), Bollier and Helfrich (Bollier & Helfrich, 2012, 2015b), Borch and Kornberger (2015), Commons Josaphat (2015b), Cornu, Osri and Rochfeld (2017), De Angelis and Stavrides (2010), De Pauw, Lenna and Nalpas (2013), Dellenbaugh, Kip, Bieniok, Müller and Schwegmann (2015), European Commons Assembly (2016), Ferguson (2014), Helfrich and Haas (2009), IASC (2015), Ostrom (1990), P2P Foundation and Transnational Institute (2017), Pak and Scheerlinck (2015), Pelger, Klever, Klotz and Schulze (2017), Petrescu (2010), Shareable (2017), Van Reusel, De Clerck, Pak and Verbeke (2015), Vicinia (2018a)

2 Relational values here are understood as the concept is described by David Bollier (2016a).

grassland –and thus the right to the commons- used to be acknowledged de facto (Bollier, 2014; De Angelis, 2010).

In this collective stewardship, it is vital to protect the shared meadows from overgrazing -the commons to not be overexploited. The threat of self-interest -even at the cost of the community and the own means of reproduction- is there and has informed the conception of the “*Tragedy of the Commons*” (Hardin, 1968). The renowned economic Elinor Ostrom (1990), however, counters the dogma of the tragedy and claims that commoning processes can overcome this challenge. She claims that communities can effectively manage and sustain the commons by setting up constraining rules (Bollier, 2014; De Angelis, 2010).

The discourse of the tragedy of the commons got feet on the ground and provided a foundation to claim in favor of the privatization of these commons. During the industrialization period, the grasslands got fenced off, and the village community no longer were able to access their common resource. The collective management of traditional commons converted into a market system privileging private ownership. People became consumers as they lost their communities “*with their shared, long-term, nonmarket interest*” (Bollier, 2014, p. 40). The commons have been commodified, and the humanity that is essential to them had to make place for standard economics. The community got traded off for Economic Man (Bollier, 2016a; Bollier & Helfrich, 2015b; De Angelis, 2010).

Today there are still some traditional commons left, but often they are threatened by the on-going enclosure movement. With the recent economic and financial crisis, the commons has also been re-emerging as **a potential alternative for the neoliberal system**. In this light new types of commons have been emerging. Out of these “many galaxies of commons” (Bollier, 2014, p. 127) the most strong one might be the digital commons –like Wikipedia- that developed on the breeding ground of technological innovations and the Web. Another galaxy that is emerging is the one in which the overall work of Commons Josaphat can be positioned; the galaxy of the urban commons (Bollier, 2014; P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017).

Research on the **urban commons**<sup>3</sup> is relatively new, and practitioners and scholars are still looking how to obtain a better understanding and to develop them further. The urban commons are directly linked to spaces and places, but at the same time are also embedded in the broader organization of society. The “urban” thus can also be related to an urban collectivity; the city in its relational and immaterial sense. In this light, the city -as the place where all the facets of everyday life come to bare- forms an interesting and challenging scene for the (re-)emergence of the commons. More strongly connected to public space, urban commons –and the commoning processes that come inherently with them- redefine space as a process. Urban commons as spaces –processes- through which social relations are expressed and in which rules of sharing are formed. In the words of Daphne Büllesbach in “*Shifting the Baselines*” (European Alternatives, Büllesbach, Cilleiro, & Stolze, 2017, p. 16): “*It is often the city, the space of social and cultural condensation, that provides the breeding ground for new ideas and formations...*”

A growing interest in the urban commons cannot only be found in the activism of Commons Josaphat. The 2016 Conference on Urban Commons of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) organized in Bologna, Italy (IASC, 2015) accumulated a significant share of the research on the topic. This venue was not

3 For which I base my theoretical knowledge on the following references: (Borch & Kornberger, 2015; Dellenbaugh et al., 2015; IASC, 2015; Shareable, 2017; Stravides & Verlic, 2016).

coincidentally located in the city that pioneered with the “*local regulation on collaboration between citizens and the municipality to care, regenerate and reuse urban commons*” (Ciaffi & Saporito, 2017; Comune di Bologna, 2015), which addresses the urban environment as “a collaborative social ecosystem” (Bollier, 2017). Furthermore, the recently established European Assembly of the Commons (ECA) opened a working group on “*The Right to the City*” at their Assembly in Madrid, October 2017 (European Commons Assembly, 2017a, 2017b). In Belgium, increased awareness on the potential of urban commons can be marked by the development of the Commons Transition Plan for the city of Ghent (Bauwens & Onzia, 2017) and research into the commons of Flanders and Brussels (Pak & Scheerlinck, 2015)<sup>4</sup>.

Besides various practices of urban commons are disseminated in the “*Make\_Shift City*” publication by Francesca Ferguson (2014) or are listed in the “*Sharing Cities*” book by Shareable (2017). These publications do not only show that there are many interesting examples, but that these also touch upon different themes of urban life. The discussed projects often impact on a small and local scale. They are acts of the reclaiming and transforming of urban spaces as/into a commons and as such provide a foothold within the design and development of the urban environment.

More and more community-based city making initiatives are becoming recognized or labeled as urban commons. Though; the broader effects of such hands-on approaches –on their own or in their collectivity- need to be further discussed, practiced and researched. Whether how small, practices of urban commons act at numbers levels and manifest the right to the city (Harvey, 2008). And although some practices of urban commons managed to scale out and become distributed over different geographical areas; it is clear that urban commons -like the traditional natural ones- have no one-size fits all formula available (Bader & Liesegang, 2014; Borch & Kornberger, 2015).

As concrete utopias, practices of urban commons rethink the city. As a political process, the urban commons make and reclaim urban –often public- spaces to be managed collectively and stand against neoliberal mechanisms of individualization and profit-driven agenda's. In practice, urban spaces offer laboratories for coexistence in the city and self-organization of citizens (Bader & Liesegang, 2014; Borch & Kornberger, 2015; Dellenbaugh et al., 2015; Ferguson, 2014; Shareable, 2017).

It is in this movement of urban commoning that I want to position the community-oriented initiatives at Josaphat's ground. Related to the commons claim by CJ, these self-proclaimed transitional activities can be related both to the theoretical underpinning of the urban commons as well as referential practices in the field of urban architectural design. Although I am aware not all my peers at Josaphat's ground might agree, I claim that the self-organized urban interventions that I will further discuss in this chapter can be labeled as urban commons initiatives.

c. A kitchen, a garden, a house, and something more.

The doctoral design practice is made up of several uAD interventions that are grounded on Josaphat and which I –as architect-research and architect-writer- claim to be **practices of urban commoning**.

4 Many more venues could be listed; I chose to mention these as throughout the design-based participatory action research of this dissertation I have been in contact with these projects.



For this, “three plus one” uAD interventions will be discussed. This selection is motivated by the symbolic strength of each of these interventions as they represent an essential element of life. The tripartite consists of the garden of “Jardin Latinis” that was the first arrival at Josaphat’s self-proclaimed transitional use. The second is its follow-up intervention for a mobile kitchen on site; “Recup’Kitchen”. And to conclude the third intervention consists of a house built through the “Maison des Possibles” project. A garden, a kitchen, and a house. Together the garden, kitchen, and house embody archetypal structures affiliated with the essence of our living environment.

In Dutch “**huis-tuin-en-keuken**”, (house-garden-and-kitchen) is an expression and adjective used to describe the common nature of something. It entails the notion of “*household, common-or-garden*” (Van Dale, 2018). It connects back to the everyday and has a connotation of banality and simplicity. It embraces the existential building blocks of our life.

In addition to these house-garden-and-kitchen interventions, I will add on the somewhat invisible work embedded in the “Josaph’Aire” nonprofit. This support infrastructure has emerged as an outcome of –amongst other self-proclaimed transitional uses– the house, garden, and kitchen agencies, and has been created to enable the collectivity of these initiatives at Josaphat. Although not bringing about any significant spatial changes, to me Josaph’Aire symbolizes **the reproductive work underlying** the self-proclaimed transitional uAD and related commoning processes. Josaph’Aire (JA) carries within its juridical entity a vague promise of future continuation and federalization.

In extension the combination of the three design interventions and the more invisible work embedded in JA. The concept of “huis-tuin-en-keuken” in the context of this doctoral research and design practice is conceptualized as “commons”, in this referencing to the commons-oriented values underlying the kitchen, garden, and house with something more embodied in the JA nonprofit. With this, I introduce the notion of “**commons architecture**” to embody the uAD practice embedded in this tripartite plus one at Josaphat’s self-proclaimed transitional use.

In my experience the “huis”, “tuin” and “keuken” all in their particular way take on **stewardship over a common good**; ranging from food production and consumption over our natural environment and its resources to the disciplines of architecture and urban production. The three plus one uAD interventions are conceptualized, realized and governed by self-organized communities that are currently still developing and consolidating the collective stewardship and care-taking of these commons –taking up commoning processes. Together – and more strongly represented by Josaph’Aire– they bring out a movement. Within their specific context situated in the urban environment of Brussels and at the in-between condition of Josaphat as wasteland and to-be-developed neighborhood, I consider these common uAD interventions as urban commons. As architect-researcher, I have been actively living the emergence of the garden beginning 2015 until its current state today (June 2018). From mid-2015 onward I have initiated and intensively co-creation the kitchen from wandering idea (Van Reusel, 2016b) to on-going project. From beginning 2016, I had co-imagined and supported the construction of the Maison des Possibles and early 2017 I have co-founded the Josaph’Aire nonprofit, persisted a facilitating role throughout. As architect-researcher, I have –to a bigger or smaller extent– taken part in these curious urban commons. The design-based participatory action research has made them to the same extent they made the doctoral research and design practice. They are both the input and output of Josaphat in its

constellation as living lab at large. As commons, they have built on to Josaphat's ground and reached for its air.

In the following sections, I will provide a brief description of the kitchen, garden, house and their something more. Mostly, I aim to give an account of their being as urban commons through **reconstructions of the lived experiences (REC)** within their on-going realization processes. As architect-writer, I narrate the creation process of these three plus one through four strategic moments; the imagining, scouting, constructing and caring. These phases are not marked by clear-cut boundaries and sometimes have parallel timelines and contaminate each other. These trajectories of imagining, scouting, constructing and caring are strongly entangled. As well do the four initiatives interweave in each other's functioning, despite the fact they are here described as separate entities. The REC give an account of what we have been building up as commoners together. A "we" that differs from case to case and that changes over time. The kitchen, garden, house and something more –the commons architecture- is ours. These RECs are revisited and written down by me as part of those "we's", as architect-researcher and as architect-writer. In the here and now of this dissertation.

## 00.04.02 Recup'Kitchen

In this section, I will describe the first uAD intervention out of the house-garden-and-kitchen tripartite. "Recup'Kitchen" (RK) will be briefly described through its governance, spatial orientation, program, support, and appreciation. Also, I will inexplicitly reveal some of its situated knowledges through reconstructing lived experiences in the imagine, scout, construct and care framework.

GOVERNANCE / Recup'Kitchen is a mobile kitchen that uses recuperated food leftovers to bring people together around the table in public space. The idea got launched in May 2015 via the "*Brussels Good Food 2020*" creative call for ideas. Since then the three initiators of the RK concept have been looking for more volunteers to join. Through open calls for participation and a crowdfunding campaign, the core group has expanded and changed. Still today the project is open to new people and input in line with its core ambitions.

The project aims to create social cohesion in public space and address the problem of food waste. Through collective cooking, Recup'Kitchen shows healthy and sustainable dishes do not have to be expensive and can be delivered in a solidary economy. Participation is required to make this happen.

Today the project runs on a core team of around ten volunteers that invest themselves according to their energy. This core group has founded a nonprofit structure (Recup'Kitchen asbl). The decisions are made collectively during their monthly meetings in which the responsibilities for the organization and practical running of RK are shared. Newcomers are warmly welcomed, yet not always evident to attract. Besides, the collective can count on many other volunteers that assist in the cooking or help out in cleaning the dishes.

RK looks for synergies with other local projects and associations. Currently, the team looks to expand the project by creating a cargo bike kitchen in order to travel more

within Brussels.

SPACE / The idea emerged at Josaphat's ground and in relation to the Jardin Latinis garden. The ambition has always been to be mobile and to be able to travel to other public spaces in Brussels to instigate debate through cooking and eating together. However, due to administrative reasons, the "roulotte" (circus wagon) that hosts RK (see 00.04.fig. 2) has never moved from Josaphat since it was parked there in 2015.

Being one of the first initiatives of self-proclaimed transitional use at Josaphat, the kitchen had its role in setting up facilities like installing an electricity connection and providing a –although tiny- space for shelter and storage in addition to the kitchen.

PROGRAM / Starting from cooking as an assembling force, RK has social aspirations. Also, the project challenges the consumer-oriented use of public spaces and demands active participation. As people gather around to table to cut vegetables or taste the dishes, conversations naturally come across Josaphat and her being as –in summer- quiet natural zone and to-be-developed area of regional interest. In this sense, the kitchen project functions as a catalyst for urban awareness and trigger for political debate.

Through a free donation price, Recup'Kitchen wants to be accessible and solidary. Through its small scale functioning, RK shows that other types of economies are possible. This statement relates to food sustainability, questioning food waste and advocating awareness of food as a common resource.

SUPPORT / The mobile kitchen has been financed through a crowdfunding campaign –through the Grow-funding platform- in which more than 150 donations have been received to obtain the required 7000 euro to set up the initiative. Since then RK has been self-sustaining thanks to its strong team of dedicated volunteers and supported by income generated through its activities.

Recup'Kitchen's offers soups, salads, quiches, dishes, and local and biological drinks at a price that is free to choose. Important is that the service offered is not for free and demands active participation as well as minimal contributions in order to cover the costs and keep the project ongoing.

Moreover, the RK team from time to time engages in a catering activity –for which it receives numerous requests. This activity is quite exhausting for its team but allows to bring in some money that can compensate for the pro-bono events the RK team also engages in.

In order to recharge the human energy and fight fatigue, RK's activities change gear during the winter period and move to a lower event rate. However, behind the screens, meetings and administrative work continue all year through.

Currently, the team is saving up for new investment; a cargo bike kitchen that would allow to more easily expand the activities beyond Josaphat. On the long term, the RK team dreams of being able to employ someone to facilitate the organization and to manifest meaningful jobs can be found through altering practices.

APPRECIATION / Recup'Kitchen started from spontaneous ideas and ad hoc aspirations emerging from the field. No business plan was set up, and the crowdfunding had been a process of learning by doing. The continuation of the project and the strategic decisions made are firmly based on the concerns and desires of the volunteers that make up its core team.

When the project got launched through its crowdfunding campaign, nobody had a clear vision on what the project would become and how it would function. Step by step –as the first hurdles were taken- the group built up a way of functioning and strategies

for organizing activities and partnerships. Still today a lot of RK's functioning is steered by serendipity.

Recup'Kitchen is highly dependent on its volunteers. Something which can be felt now as the general energy is low and the project is facing difficulties in launching this year's summer season actively. RK exists due to its generous funders; this makes people's participation an existential attribute of this project. Something RK values as a quality that resulted in strong autonomy and legitimacy as well as solid grass-roots support.

RK is eager to reach out to non-evident locations and refreshing partnerships. Using public space in a way that citizens are not used to, RK brings about an intriguing dynamic of surprise and spontaneous conversation that shows to reach interesting depths.

Through food as connector, non-evident groups of people come together in an unfamiliar setting, RK as such manifests different ways of engaging in the city are possible.

As a nonprofit organization RK focuses on remaining self-sustaining and carries the ambition to grow sustainably. With the free-to-choose price, the initiative illustrates that public space does not have to be a place of consumption. In contrary, RK values participation –helping in the cooking or by cleaning the dishes- over monetary contributions. In the end, it is this energy of reciprocity that keeps the team of volunteers going.

REFERENCES / In addition to the situated knowledges obtained through the design-based participatory action research: (Carlot, 2016; Ezelstad, 2016; Growfunding / bxl, 2015; Masson-Loodts & Raevens, 2017; Nostalgie, 2016; Recup'Kitchen, 2016; Van Reusel, 2016a, 2016b).











< 00.04.fig.1 – People are gathering around the table at Josaphat, May 2017. Photo by Toha De Brant.  
00.04.fig.2 -RK during an event of Schaarbeek laat, June 2015. Photo by Mathieu Simonson.



I am at home at my parents' place, kilometers away from Josaphat and Brussels. I am behind my laptop and edit the last changes to the illustrations I have been working on these last days. We had bumped into the "Creativity call for Brussels 2015". The call aims to be an "urban brain-storm" and trigger sustainable innovation considering food in the city, more particularly Brussels.

Last minute we decided to go for it and to propose our idea for a kitchen at Josaphat. Until then it had been no more than a vague dream, exciting imaging that had popped up during my first visits to Josaphat in the company of Paula –active in Commons Josaphat- and Mathieu –who initiated the Jardin Latinis. The nomadic garden was just getting feet on the ground, and so we wonder: what if we would have a kitchen to invite more people? What if we could bring it to the nearby industrial zone and connect to the people working there?

It long had been a "silly" dream, wishful thinking. However, maybe we could at least share our ideas, give them some more consistency?

With the Creative call for "Brussels Urban Food 2020" we were nudged to put things to paper. Both in wording as in visuals (see 00.04.fig. 3). We naturally connect our idea for a kitchen in a maritime container within Josaphat's self-organized temporary use to a long term vision; 2025 the year in which the first phase of Josaphat's development is supposed to be finished. Our envisioned kitchen relates to the just emerging nomadic garden which we imagine to later transit into urban agriculture with an open market hall. This hall would be an incubator for the exchange of food through a commons dynamic. An aspect inspired by Commons Josaphat's (2015b) proposal advocating local and social employment, taking part in a genuinely sustainable neighborhood.

We have seen what Josaphat's garden and the monthly picnic the commons events could lead to. Maybe a kitchen on Josaphat. Maybe –in the long run- a different relation to food production and consumption in our city.

Working on the proposal feels natural. It seems evident, based on our shared ambition to manifest the more strategic vision of CJ with the desire for physical and hands-on interventions.

It is fun, making explicit how imagined interventions at Josaphat now could impact and transit into its planned future. I can weave in my urban interest with the everyday of gardening and eating together as social condenser –as I had learned to appreciate it through the picnic events. I enjoy to bring out the debate led by CJ concerning a proposal for concrete action, but also in to imagine projects and manifesting them as sustainable and innovative if only by making them enter through the framework of the call. The written articulation gives body to our dreamy ideas. The idea -sliding into a more robust concept- gets its name "Recup'Kitchen".

The most joy, though, I find in making the illustrations. Hand drawn images brought together in digital collaging. Simple drawings that represent what was already there, just building up and linking it to our imaginations. Sketchy, yet with detail to it and taking into account the lived experiences at Josaphat. Not very clean and indeed not finished as they bring about the more lengthy process of dreaming that is still on-going and changing. Quick, yet open. A tool to bring out and communicate our forming ideas and ambitions.

It is a somewhat impulsively driven process, and we just had made it just in time for

the deadline. We genuinely believe in it. Did we know what this ad hoc articulation of our simmering ideas would trigger...

#### REC.2015.11.01 - Scout: Preparing the crowdfunding

It is a beautiful autumn day, we are lucky. With some of the initiators of Recup'Kitchen, we meet at Josaphat. We gather around the red painted table that Mathieu and I have recuperated and that forms the central point of the activities.

Our crowdfunding campaign –on the Brussels Growfunding platform- is about to launch in a couple of days. Through a call, we have gathered more participants to join the project and to help to formulate its ambitions. We have our project description ready. Last work to be done now is to shoot a short video that could present our Recup'Kitchen idea to a broad audience.

As we discuss the shooting process, more people join. Neighbors and gardeners are crossing us, curiously come and have a look at the installation we are setting up.

I take out the drawings that I had prepared beforehand. Again hand-drawn, sketchy and simple representations (see 00.04.fig.4). Lines that I have carefully traced with the images I have picked up from our group discussions. This time the kitchen comes in the form of a caravan. Mobile, as we want to be able to travel beyond Josaphat and seek connections to other public spaces in Brussels. The caravan opens up with a big window, behind the glass there is the silhouette of a person. In addition there are illustrations of fruits and vegetables –the food surplus we aim to recuperate-, of a table with many chairs –the convivial encounter we want to trigger-, a piggy bank –the free-at-choice price-, and a photo of the current state of the Jardin Latinis garden at which we plan to embed our kitchen. The later provides the background for our imaged dream.

The illustrations represent our core ambitions, which we have articulated in the statement text for the crowdfunding campaign. Through the concrete project, they articulate our values and show how they can be acted out. It renders our ideas explicit in relation to our more visionary ambitions.

We run through our statement text for the last time and shoot the material for a video in which the many voices –and accents - of our participants express what we imagine RK to be. We create a visual play by moving around the illustrations, bringing them in and out the picture according to our statement.

*“Recup'Kitchen. A mobile kitchen for everyone.*

*Hello! Hi. Bonjour! Hello, we are the Recup'Kitchen team.*

*A mobile kitchen that will be set up in a caravan at the Josaphat site in Brussels.*

*We need seven thousand euros to build it. Recup'Kitchen will help to promote healthy food. And farm-to-table food. We cook meals, and you pay as you can, starting at a minimum price.*

*Recup'Kitchen will also be a meeting place at the Josaphat site to daydream, chat, take a break and create bonds.*

*To set up this project, we need seven thousand euros, a helping hand or you to spread the word. Thank you.*

*Support us at... [www.growfunding.be](http://www.growfunding.be)”*

(“Growfunding. Recup’Kitchen [film],” 2015)

Every shot we make mistakes, we laugh. So no the result is not perfect as we stop after three shootings. I am happy as the many voices and hands represent our collectivity, scouting the possibilities for a shared imagination. The project has shifted through the blending of our objectives, interests, and desires as the “we” behind the project has been shifting.

#### REC.2016.03.30 – Construct: Getting ready to open

We did it! We successfully have made it through the crowdfunding campaign and have obtained the required 7000 euros to kick off. A multitude of small donations has brought us there. Today we need to get this done and keep up our promise to our generous supporters.

We do not have much of a clue on how to pursue. We had focused on buying a circus wagon that we would transform into our mobile kitchen. So here we are today. Our quite spacious “roulotte” has been installed at Josaphat, close by the Latinis garden. In one month we plan our big opening event. The kitchen still has to be made.

Today I meet at Josaphat with Mohamed and Reindert. We are crouched over the floor of the wagon as we pass our hands over a grey vinyl floor covering. Earlier this week I have bought this leftover piece in one of the local shops with a friend — leftovers at dumping prices, very much us.

We are pressing the vinyl to the irregular sides of the roulotte to cut out the shape with precision. Carefully we tape the sides off, and to our frustration, we notice air bumps did manage to come up, despite our meticulous efforts.

As the light of this early spring day fades away, we call it a day. We clean up our material and will continue later to fix the floor further.

To be honest, we improvise. We all bring in the few things we know and accept the imperfect results that come out. After all, we are creating this kitchen ourselves, with our bare and diverse hands from an idea over funding to its construction now, making our imagination to become true in physical intervention.

We go for it with an intensity and conviction that we do not understand ourselves. An aspiration for relation values drives us; favoring the local, reuse, collective work, doing things ourselves. In the kitchen’s creation, we express our shared longing for a different way of acting.

So no, the result is far off perfect. And I have to start to except that this kitchen –with these aesthetics- won’t end up in architectural magazines. I have to accept that not everyone will take this as a serious urban architectural intervention.

But I do. And here we are, actually building our kitchen. Carefully cleaning its interior, branding its image with a red touch of paint on its exterior. It has been made by many hands, funded by many donations and we share our making process enthusiastically with our supporters through our Facebook page.

Soon we will invite our donors and celebrate Recup’Kitchen’s existence with them.

Summer, Josaphat radiates its most energetic vibe. Nature in bloom, the self-proclaimed for transitional uses in full action.

Today with CJ I organize one of the happenings of the “wasteland FESTIVAL de la friche”. Today the weekly meeting of the gardeners and the regular cooking session of Recup’Kitchen are complemented with a debate. Hoping to inspire the civic agents at Josaphat as well as beyond we have programmed informal presentations by Communa asbl and Aurelie De Smet. Today’s thematic session brings together concrete expertise and academic knowledge on the potential of temporary/transitional use in the city.

Most of us are in a state of satisfaction as we have just enjoyed a lavish buffet of mixed vegetable dishes. I feel empowered as I have nurtured my body with pure and healthy food. It brings me fulfillment to realize I took part in the preparation of this abundant amount of colorful and tasteful dishes we have enjoyed together.

The presentations –that I need to introduce- will soon start. I first allow my eyes to gaze over Josaphat’s open landscape. Its yellowish green. I become aware of the tinkling cutlery and light chatter that I hear in the background of this scene. As an automatism, I pick up some of the empty pots that are left on the table and bring them over to a flipped over cable pulley that serves as a table.

I start to rinse the dirt off the dishes and pick up a sponge. Maïté picks up a towel and takes over the plates as I have cleaned them. I become aware of the tiredness I feel, but I know the work is far from finished.

It is a moment of in-between. In which I can feel grateful for this moment, this community, this place. I can see the beauty of what we have built together. Many things achieved, a lot more to be done.

Part of this the never-ending caretaking. Often translated into cleaning.

Starting the Recup’Kitchen meal, when people have gathered around the table, I often introduce our project. I stress the need for participation; in the funding of the kitchen and in paying through a free-at-choice donation –no this is not for free. In good habit, I conclude the presentation with a request to help us clean the dishes. It is –like all the other elements- necessary to keep our project going. It is one of our essential basics; cleaning up together.

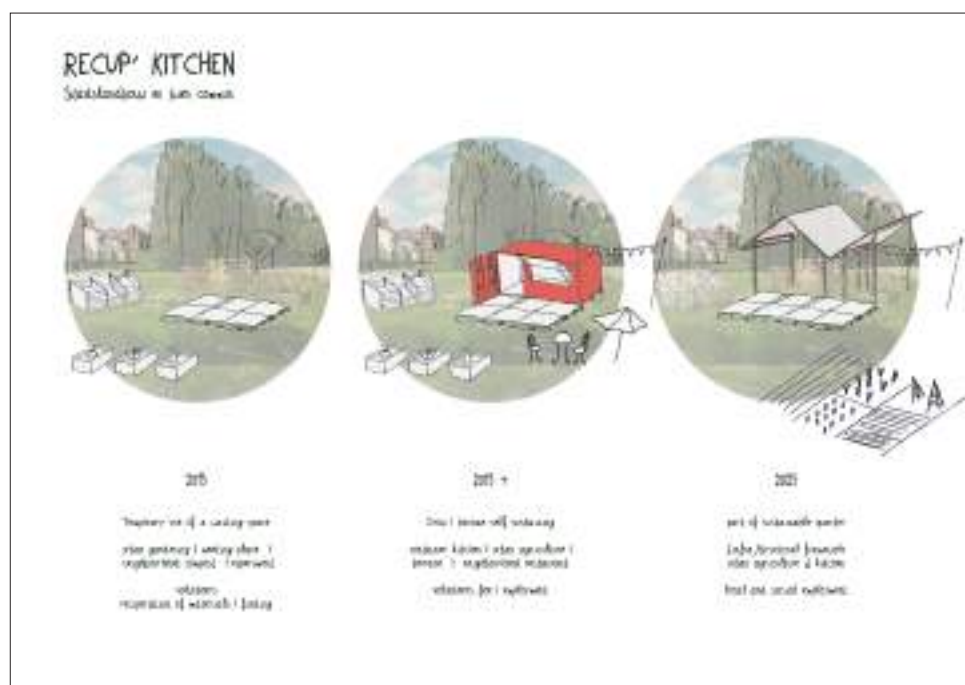
In cleaning the dishes lies a beauty of caring, of reproductive work. We bound over it. It is often invisible, at the side. More easily we get to notice it when it is not done; it can lead to frustration. We have increasingly become aware of its value. To me it is an essential element of the Recup’Kitchen logic, it is in our DNA.

When the presentations have finished -the debate has taken its loaded yet positive tone- most of our visitors are finding their way back home. A couple of us stays to take care of the final wrap up. Chairs at the side, all the pots back in the kitchen, last food leftovers to be divided –yes, we really try to waste nothing.

We take a beer –or Moroccan mint tea- and sit together.

Anna’s concept of the “Abschiedsbier” has brought us to value a closing moment together explicitly. In the first instance, to keep the fun in there. Stand still and enjoy. See what we have achieved together. Feel to be part of it.

Cleaning the dishes and having a beer/tea together; commoning at its pure everyday liveliness.



00.04.fig.3 – The illustration of RK as conceptualized for the Brussels Good Food 2020 call, May 2015.  
00.04.fig.4 – Screenshot from the presentation video for the crowdfunding of RK, November 2015.



00.04.fig.5 – The inauguration event of RK, April 2016.

00.04.fig.6 – An important element of the RK logic; cleaning the dishes together, summer 2016.



## 00.04.03 Jardin Latinis

Here I will discuss the garden as the second element of the house-garden-and-kitchen tripartite. “Jardin Latinis” (JL) will be addressed through a framework dealing with its governance, space, program, support, and appreciation after which I hope to let you taste some of its everyday liveliness through experiences in imagining, scouting, constructing and caring for this uAD intervention at Josaphat.

**GOVERNANCE** / The Jardin Latinis is a nomadic garden that pioneered the self-proclaimed transitional use of Josaphat in March 2015. More than just a garden, its volunteers aim the project to build social cohesion and to reconnect our relation with nature in the city. Initiated by Mathieu, the garden has incrementally expanded and developed working groups according to different tasks to be done such as communication, construction, etc. The caretakers of the garden interchange over time but they maintain a collective and shared governance through weekly meetings.

The garden provides some facilities that are beneficial for all users and of which the stewardship is increasingly shared by the other initiatives that the JL has welcomed at “their” part of Josaphat. As such, the garden also takes care of water recuperation, a neighborhood compost, and dry toilets. Furthermore, to prevent Josaphat’s southwest corner from flooding during the winter, the gardeners have dug a pound that receives increasing interest from the many naturalists that frequent Josaphat.

**SPACE** / The JL installed its first wooden crates for plants at Josaphat’s southwest corner. This part is the most accessible as Josaphat here has a direct relation to some of its surrounding neighborhoods. This side of Josaphat also is the first to be developed according to the plans of the MSI. Inspired by CJ’s commons claim, the nomadic garden provokes an activist use of the site in which the close neighbors of Josaphat are the aimed audience. Not coincidental the garden is named at its adjacent street; the Latinis-laan.

**PROGRAM** / The JL has always aimed to be more than just a garden. Experiments with permaculture, building an insect hotel and organized get-togethers and workshops evolve compliment the gardening activities. Through this agency, the JL challenges the contemporary disconnection between the city and its nature as well as it aims to trigger awareness of urban food production at a highly local scale. Claiming food as a commons, the gardeners also explore permaculture, water recuperation, composting and invest in triggering biodiversity on the Josaphat site.

**SUPPORT** / The garden initiated very spontaneously and since then thrives of recuperated materials and volunteering power. As the nomadic garden had grown, members were asked to contribute with a minimal yearly fee that would pay for the necessary investments to maintain and further expand the garden.

Besides the Jardin Latinis has received some support through subsidies and professional accompaniment. The gardeners as well have been offered a small financial contribution from the naturalists for the work they realized to enlarge and take care of the pound that is situated within Josaphat’s self-proclaimed transitional use. However, the most significant investment comes from its civic agents as they invest their time and energy voluntarily.

**APPRECIATION** / The JL started off from a very humble yet essential need; connecting back to nature in the city. In a way, the project represents the overall interest



in gardening that one way or another turns out to be recurring successful. Also, social cohesion stands central and nudges the project to evolve incrementally with the meaning human-ecological environmental as its primary concern.

The JL kicked off from a spontaneous act that was translated into a communicative and open invitation for those interested to join. According to the energies of those entering in and leaving, the garden managed to evolve on the ways of an incremental and motivation-driven approach.

Its members look for a strong relationship with the direct surroundings of the garden, both being the adjacent Latinis neighborhood as the marvelous nature zone that Josaphat has an offer. The garden is positioned in-between the human culture of the urban and the unpredictable wildness of nature. Ideas and side-projects develop in relation to input from these surrounding conditions.

A humble attitude has been at the base of the JL. Gardening is valued as a means to have your hands touching the earth. The JL's spatial intervention are all realized at the service for the garden or the broader everyday use of the site –such as making paths out of bark so your feet wouldn't sink in the mud during winter. Its gardeners aim to act as much as possible in respect of the neighbors and in favor of ecological biodiversity. Members of the garden contribute both by small financial support as well as their energy and regular caretaking.

Using recuperated materials, sharing tools and growing food that is often shared among the collective, the garden entails generative activities. These activities –apart from being generous with people and food– also has manifest Josaphat as a site to experiment a commons-oriented approach in the urban context.

REFERENCES / In addition to the situated knowledges obtained through the design-based participatory action research: (Dewey asbl, 2015; Jardin Latinis, 2018; Masson-Loodts & Raevens, 2017; Mathieu, 2015).



00.04.fig.7 – Meeting of CJ at the Jardin Latinis, June 2015.

> 00.04.fig.8 – Jardin Latinis in bloom, June 2018.





00.04.fig.9 – Connecting while untangling, the power of recuperation, June 2015. Photo by Dewey asbl.

00.04.fig.10 – Exploring how to construct a shelter for the JL, June 2015. Photo by Dewey asbl.



00.04.fig.11 - The reflective surface of Josaphat's pound in Josaphat's pound, July 2017. Photo by Toha De Brant



*“Spring is coming!*

*Help us to transform... a “terrain vague” into a vegetable garden!*

*Ready ?”*

An empty wooden crate stands on the pavement of the pedestrian sidewalk.

*“Step 1: Find a wooden box.”*

In stop motion the underground of the crate changes, broken concrete interchanges with different types of tiling.

*“Step 2: Write your name and email address on it.”*

We switch to a side view of the crate. It is now positioned at a background made up of brown vegetation and earth. The email address of the Dewey nonprofit is being written on it.

*“Step 3: Cover the bottom with cardboard or an old newspaper.”*

Exemplars of the “Ezelstad journal” –published by Dewey- move in stop motion over a changing surface of the earth and dried leaves. Slowly the newspapers move toward the wooden crate and crawl in to cover the inside.

*“Step 4: Fill the box with 20 to 30 liters of potting soil.”*

The wooden crate is now filled with earth and moves along a pedestrian crossing over the street. Passing over the tram bedding, those who know the Latinis neighborhood might start to recognize this traffic cross-ing nearby Josaphat’s southwest corner.

*“Step 5: Take the box to the Josaphat wasteland via the entrance at the Avenue Latinis in Schaarbeek.”*

The crate stands in front of Josaphat’s grey wall, fencing off its open landscape from the Latinislaan. The box moves on from the concrete bottom of the improvised parking spaces at Josaphat’s entrance to its muddy ground. Yellowish grass with dried leaves bring a colorful contrast with the greyish color of the with earth filled wooden crate.

The plant box moves its way up the site. Those who know Josaphat might recognize its impermeable ground that causes swampy areas during winter times.

The crate wanders along and slides through the long brown grasses that characterize Josaphat’s winter appearance.

A close up follows a seed that is climbing in the plant box and finds shelter in its fresh potting soil.

*“Step 6: Sow.”*

Every time I come to our corner of Josaphat’s generous space, I am pleasantly surprised by the growth of the garden. Since its first set of wooden crates different type of planting containers have been recuperated. Old fish basins from a former “poissonerie”, wooden boxes made for pallet transports and series of pallets that make up a terrace reveal our growing presence.

Today Josaphat’s spontaneous garden brings together a group of around twenty people.

<sup>5</sup> I did not take part in this event, yet have lived it through the video reportage “potager spontané / pop-up moestuïn (at) Schae/arbeek” published by Dewey. Dewey asbl. (2015). Dewey: potager spontané / pop-up moestuïn @ Schae/arbeek. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RiXVJvIiRA>

All for their own reasons enthusiast to help out and build on to this hidden garden. The JL regularly unites people through events while join in animating Josaphat's southwest corner by organizing the "picnic the commons" events as part of Commons Josaphat. Complimentary to these regular activities Mathieu sets up workshops. On the program today: a workshop on how to build a shelter, necessary to recuperate rainwater as summer is approaching.

Patrick –a joyful engineer, volunteering to help us- informs us of the essentials for the construction. I am enthusiast about his technical sketches. And with our group we engagingly discuss what type of foundations best to construct; if we want to stay in the grey zone of urban regulations, we better make sure these are not anchored in the soil. Our presence at Josaphat is not legally approved. Nevertheless, we are cautious for administrative requirements. It is essential to stay away from any sort of structure that would require a building permit.

The enthusiasm is there. Sort of a plan is on the table –figuratively as we do not even have a table at this moment. But so how do we get started? We are a motivated bunch of people. That's it.

We explore Josaphat, and at the construction site nearby the railway tracks, we find some leftover materials that still might be at use to us. We harvest a big bag of entangled and cut off outdoor ropes and some large wooden beams that have been left abandoned. I spent the rest of my afternoon untangling ropes and chatting to some of the fellow participants. What could we do with these? Maybe weave a side frame for the shelter on which plants could grow?

It is clear we won't have any hardcore intervention made today. I feel slightly frustrated by our feebleness as we both out of necessity –we do not have the money- as well as out of principle –reuse for sustainability- do not manage to move beyond the recuperation of materials today. When will we get something built?

Yet as we entangle our conversations naturally bring up interesting debates. What do we aim at? How are we dealing with the owner of the site? I get to know Frantz and Mathieu from "Espaces Possibles". They have been travel-ling from Nantes by bike.

On their way, they look for inspiring self-organized urban projects and report on this research through their website. They had heard about CJ and as such found their way to Josaphat. They relate and compare our work to commoning agencies they have got to know along with their route through France as we provide them insight in our work. We share our network and advise them on projects to visit in Brussels. At our inherently local actions, we make connections reaching beyond Josaphat and its hidden ground.

Untangling knots during a pleasant spring day has its charm. Mindful through small and naïve action. Inspiring through the richness that lies underneath. Bit by bit we explore the collective production of the garden, of our city.

## REC.2016.01.31 – Construct: Digging the lake

It has been a while since I visited Josaphat. It's winter. And Recup'Kitchen's crowd-funding campaign is claiming all my free time.

I come by with Federica, a fellow doctoral student, and Incubators colleague coming to visit from Turin. It's cold, and as always during this season our southwest corner of Josaphat is soaked as an impermeable layer in the ground does not allow the abundance



of rainwater to float away.

I had expected it to be a short visit, but I bump into some familiar gardeners and naturalists. They have gathered around a small puddle that has been made to evacuate some of the superfluous water.

At a certain point, I find myself digging along. It comes natural, to offer a hand and to take part in some of the concrete actions. I distantly follow some of the conversations, addressing the environmental potential of the pound. I overhear how its presence boosts biodiversity in fauna and flora. The discussion talks about water management in Brussels in general.

I need to think of Commons Josaphat's (2015b) proposal for "Josaphat en commun" in which we claim urban development first and foremost starts from what is there. It is a priority to trace what is living in the already existing natural zone and to embrace water as an essential part of urban life more than a simple utility hidden in sewers and pipelines.

Despite the intensive work in digging, I get cold. Yet my mind and body feel re-energized. There is genuinely something mystical about messing in the mud. To feel your force as the spade glides in the earth. To hear the rhythmic cadence of throwing the earth at the puddle's borders.

#### REC.2017.11.22 – Care: Extending the lake

We just finished our meeting in a bar nearby Josaphat to discuss Josaph'Aire and whether or not to remind the MSI of their promise to offer us a convention for temporary use. It has been one of these draining discussions with high words and claims. Critical, yet exhausting and I feel puzzled about how to best continue our collective path. If it is really that necessary, that desired...

Mathieu asks if a couple of us could help out and stay a bit longer. The gardeners had just enlarged the lake, and at the request of the naturalists, they bought a cloth to cover its surface. This should help to prevent the pound of drying out during warmer times. This is critical for the different species of libellees that breed there during spring.

For the naturalists, this pound is so valuable that they personally offer the JL to reimburse them for the required investments.

With a small group, we install the heavy cloth. We turn it around, drag it until its rectangular shape matches the organic way of the pound at its best. We need to watch out for the plants at the borders, be careful not to rip the cloth and prevent at most any air bubbles and folds. It requires quite some precision for such a ponderous intervention. I still strongly appreciate the hands-on, the doing. Not without a long term vision but in the enforcement of it. To be able to read its underlying value in the experience of the everyday of it. The practical work that it demands, the working together that it requires.

I meet Martine and Geert to discuss the proposal for the “Huis van de Commons”. Geert had picked up the call, and with the three of us, we decided to use it as a trigger to work on the long-imagined idea for a “Maison de défrichage” (“house of cultivation”, playful use of the notion of “friche” meaning wasteland).

Since my integration in Commons Josaphat (early 2015) this idea to build a sort of operating base on Josaphat has been wandering around in my imaginings. No clue what form it would have or how it would function, but it occurs to be the obvious first step to launch transitional use for Josaphat. It pictures a shelter where people would meet and from which they would hands-on as well as visionary build the city. The “Urban Innovation Lab” call now offers us a window of opportunity to get into action ourselves –as CJ- and to join and strengthen the efforts with a robust spatial intervention.

The imagining of a Huis van de Commons embodies my ambition to empower what we are building at Josaphat. A subsidy granted by the Urban Innovation Lab fund would help to develop a more designed urban intervention that would invest in the public space and give our combined work an-other élan.

Our conversation is quite gentle, we each blend in our desires. Our project needs to support the commons explicitly. It should be comfortable and also welcoming to less evident publics like the elderly. It should have an open design and construction process. In the first instance it should be a building block for the future of the city, commons-oriented.

*“With the Huis van de Commons, Commons Josaphat installs an operating base for Brussels citizens to lay out the building blocks for a collective city. It” is a joint to exhibit inspiring examples and a platform for casual encounters, meetings, and debates. The House is an incubator that connects inspiring initiatives and strengthens them. In collaboration with “Pass-ages”, the House will function as a contact point and meeting center for the elderly from the neighborhood.”*

I am currently living in Turin, yet from distance I remain involved in Josaphat’s air. I am making up a request document for a temporary building permit for our Maison des Possibles. Due to an improvement in the contacts with the MSI and with the recognition offered by the subsidy we gotten for the Huis van de Commons, we obtained a promise of official approval for our moveable structure. With this approval, we need to get in order with all administrative requirements. Hence I find myself working on a building permit request.

So far it has been quite a hassle. I had first tried to legalize the Maison through a legal rule that provides an exception for a building permit when a temporary structure is built in the framework of academic research. The Brussels Capital Region’s urbanism office has judged this part of my doctoral research, and design practice is not part of university research<sup>7</sup>. An incident that still actively frustrates me today; how does the

<sup>7</sup> One year later I would learn that I could have juridically fought this decision as it is a legal right to obtain this exemption. Although I still feel frustrated about it, by that time, it was too late for any juridical pursuit to challenge this decision.

region's urbanism office define what is academic "research"? More strongly I feel agitated that this small cavity of freedom in uAD offered within the cumbersome administration had been jeopardized by administrative arbitrariness.

Today we work our way through the conventional procedure; requesting a temporary building permit. A permit that yet despite its temporary nature needs the same lengthy procedure for approval as any other building permit; being a three-month delay after the submission of request. This is just the tip of the iceberg of irony and absurdity.

Today, I focus on the more fun part of this Kafkaesque adventure; drawing the plans (see 00.04.fig. 15). It is satisfying to get to draw and to speculate what the façade of our Maison des Possibles would look like. It is challenging to outline a plan for a structure that is already half built -the bare structure being there- and of which we do not know yet what the final result will look like. I do my best to bring in the aesthetics of working with recuperated material. Drawing the interior with flexible furniture, I have fun imagining what it would look like. Under the covered terrace, I add a hammock, representing the underlying atmosphere and joy of our uAD intervention. In the collage, I add in people, actors I know, and that represent Josaphat's commons-oriented agency.

It is fun to explore to draw in-between the serious architectural depiction and the authenticity of the hands-on work on Josaphat. The result is an assemblage of technical detail, aesthetics of recuperated materials and a strong human liveliness. Like all what we do, it is a bit improvised yet with a high level of detail, if only by the small scale at which we intervene. It is a playful game in-between what is there and what could/should be.

## REC.2017.12.15 – Construct: A temporary solution for a temporary structure

I join Ivan to work on the Maison des Possibles. For a month we have acquired our temporary building permit. We can continue to operate without causing any conflictual provocation and focus on covering the wooden structure (see 00.04.fig.14). The roof –made out of recuperated printing plates- has been finished and this week we plan to make the house wind tight by covering its facades with a plastic transparent. It is not what we had in mind. Ivan has been collecting old windows that we plan to assemble as a glass façade for the house. But, winter is there, and we need a fast solution. A temporary resolution comes in the form of plastic covering. This is a pragmatic decision, not entirely in line with our ambitious ideals.

We carefully measure the sides of the house and explore how to cut best and fold the transparent. Under the roof of the house, we have a four by six meter surface that protects us from the drizzling December rain. With gloves and winter jacket on we spread out the plastic, measure it meticulously, cut, fold, staple. We plant the ladder and scaffolding in the soaking mud. Wobblingly -with our rain boots on- we climb up and place the transparent carefully. With the help of Bilal, we span the plastic and fix it onto the small timber that has been set more or less every 30 centimeters. It is a time-consuming task, and after a couple of hours, we need to warm up over a cup of tea — a moment of recuperation in which we discuss the next steps to be made.

When we see the result of the first two transparent surfaces hanging up, we come to appreciate the consoling atmosphere, the rhythm of wooden timber and transparent surface. It reminds of a traditional Japanese "shoji" where the translucent paper is

spanned over a wooden frame (see00.04.fig.13).

## REC.2018.03.02 – Care: Lighting the stove

With the students of the Spatial Mirror elective course<sup>8</sup> we meet on Josaphat. I want them to get acquainted with Josaphat and its colorful agents. The idea is to introduce these architects to our “Jour des Communs”; a day in which everyone helps to realize some common tasks. Hands-on and ad hoc, an excellent way to taste some of Josaphat’s dynamic, to bound, to give something small in return. In addition, some more people from Josaphat will join me to present the different community initiatives and projects that are happening on Josaphat.

It is snowing. Josaphat’s muddy land changes into a hard rigid and slippery surface. In attendance, there are not many things to do. Hiding out at the Maison’s warm space, we drag in some of the broken shipping pallets and saw them in pieces. I teach Joris, Maya, and Stephanie the technique that Ivan has introduced to me. Fixing the saw with your legs and feet and chafing the wood pieces along the teeth of the metal. As the sound of wood splintering becomes rhythmic, I come to appreciate the layers of teaching represented in this moment. I find myself passing on simple hands-on skills that I have picked up from the everyday necessities. So while these students are warming up due to the intense activity, I hope they come to see how they contribute to other modes of urban production.

People come in and out. The house gets overcrowded as the snow urges us all to stay inside. Roeland<sup>9</sup> and his students –working with a design studio on Josaphat’s strategic masterplan- join us. We gather, a bit crammed, around the table. Martine presents the work of Commons Josaphat with a focus on the *ilot modèle* trajectory; the design for a model building block incorporating the relational values that bind us. We go for a walk in the cold snow in which I briefly –it is freezing- explain the different uAD interventions present on Josaphat and the meaning I attribute to them. I focus on what this microarchitecture can tell about the altered future we see for Brussels. *“And so here along the wall, you can see the materials that we have recuperated and which we store until we can use them for our constructions.”* I point to a pack of recuperated windows, stacks of shipping pallets and some tables and large wooden beams covered under blue sails. Roeland picks up on this: *“You see, this is also really relevant for Josaphat in the future. If we want to create different types of production in the city and re-use more of our resources, the city will need to provide sufficient space for storage.”*

I has been my prior concern to bring the urban and architectural, the long term and the vision in direct relation with the here and now; the ad hoc and tactical interventions in everyday spatial realities. In my eyes Josaphat simmers of potential; this vast piece of open land, this hidden garden, its tense in-between, our self-proclaimed transitional use activities, our dreams, and ambitions.

<sup>8</sup> I have been teaching this 5 ECTS elective course at the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture in 2016 and 2018. The first year with the support of Johan Verbeke and Dag Boutsen. In 2018 with the support of Dag, I combined the teaching assignment with the design of a 1:1 structure that we would use for the planned FAIRE event.

<sup>9</sup> Roeland Dudal, teacher at our KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture and founder of Architecture Workroom Brussels. He also co-organizes the “You are here” exhibition discussed in section 00.05.02.b “Moving beyond the architectural now?”.



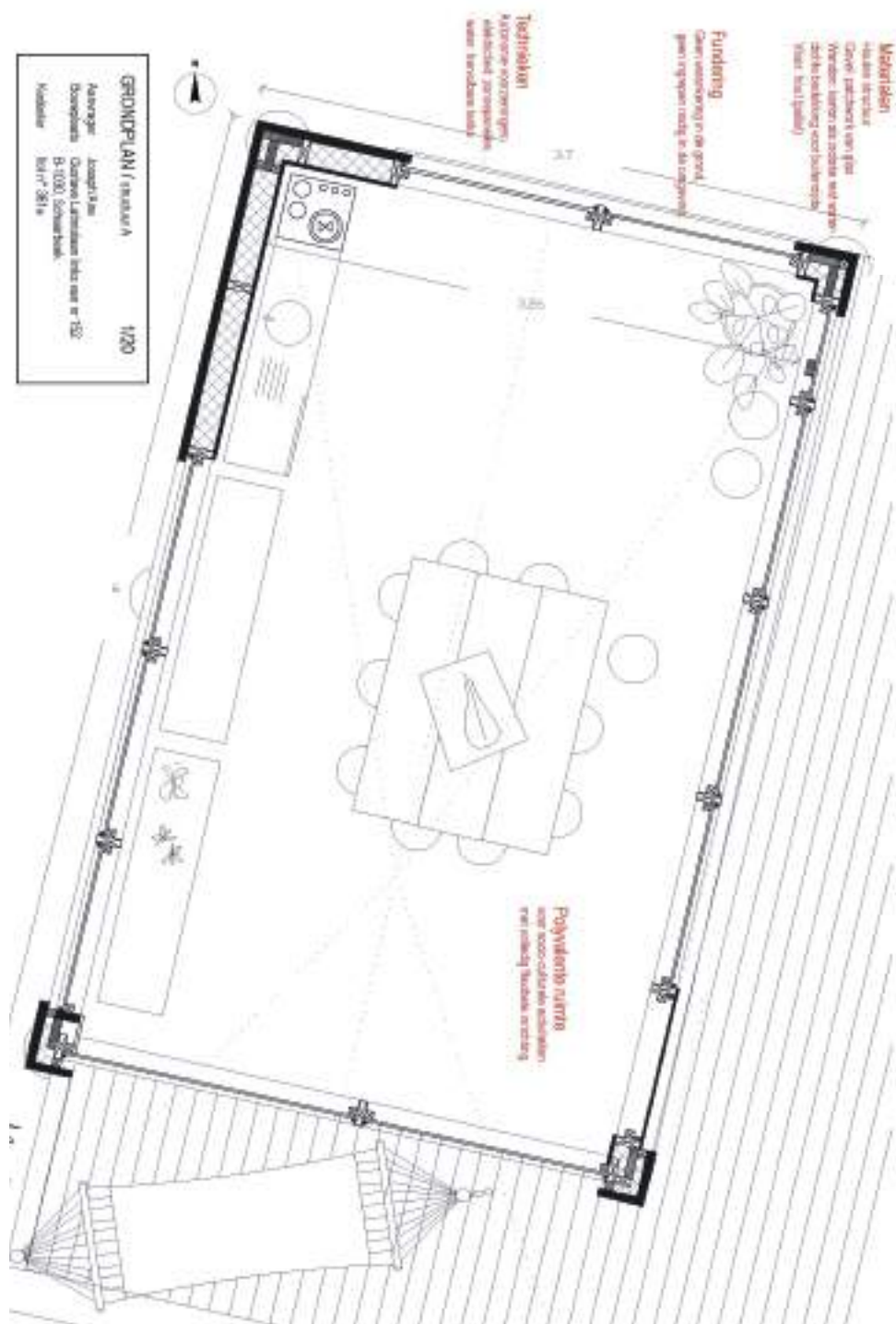
00.04.fig.12 - An imagination of the Huis van de Commons for the building permit request, May 2017.



00.04.fig.13 - A detail of the temporary façade of the MdP, December 2017.

00.04.fig.14 - The MdP in her bare structure, October 2017.





00.04.fig.15 - The plan of the MdP for the building permit request, May 2017.





00.04.fig.16 -The MdP with its temporary façade, January 2017.

## 00.04.04 Maison des Possibles

A simple pound, but so much more. A boost for biodiversity in the city. An example of shared caretaking. An urban intervention in public space. Another way to practice urban design.

To conclude the house-garden-and-kitchen tripartite I will describe the “Maison des Possibles” (MdP) freely translated as the “house of what could be”. I will discuss this self-proclaimed transitional use project through the same governance, space, program, support and appreciation framework. Also, I will highlight four of its key lived key moments as they illustrate how we imagined, scouted, constructed and cared for this “House” –and still do so today.

GOVERNANCE / The Maison des Possibles is a transportable house-like structure that provides a shelter for the community-oriented initiatives at Josaphat. Having the building process being experimentation for a different production of housing in the city, the implied program at Josaphat is oriented to incubate urban commons through offering them a place for meeting, debate, hanging around...

The MdP merges two projects; “Make-It” and “Huis van de Commons”. This in addition to the commons-oriented ambition of the project, has actively triggered shared governance between the initiators; respectively Ivan Markoff and Commons Josaphat. This triggers openness but also results in confusion. To bring some more clarity, an agreement has been made in which Ivan as the main constructor remains the owner of the infrastructure as well as he maintains the intellectual ownership of the Make-It concept. Yet the use and governance of the MdP have been transferred to the Josaph’Aire nonprofit that provides a juridical infrastructure to shelter the diverse self-proclaimed transitional use activities at Josaphat.

SPACE / The house is –like the other uAD interventions discussed here- located at Josaphat’s southwest corner and is positioned concerning the Jardin Latinis garden and the Recup’Kitchen roulotte. This location was both a convenient opportunity for experimentation (Make-It) as well as a strategic position to plant a seed for the imagined commons building block of CJ (Huis van de Commons).

PROGRAM / The Make-It project has as goal to experiment the construction of minimal housing. Built low-tech by one person with recuperated materials, the project aims to manifest a different way of housing production is possible. Drastically lowering the cost for housing Make-It aims to set citizens free so they can invest more in the community and the environment. Moreover, it is the ambition that those who use the structure help to realize two more to set in motion an “economie boule de neige” (snowball economy).

At the early construction stage of this pilot for the Make-It project -only the above ground foundations were laid –the project for a Huis van de Commons started to blend in. The housing program –which would have been a breaking point in the fragile relationship with the MSI- made a place for the ambitious program as it had been proposed by CJ for their Huis project. This project is characterized by its five main objectives: (1) creating an operating base from which to connect to Josaphat’s neighborhoods, (2) a junction from which to cross the present dynamics, (3) a platform to bring out inspirational examples, (4) a meeting place to host permanences and for welcoming people in, and (5) an incubator to connect innovative initiatives to develop ideas and generate

projects.

SUPPORT / In its conception the construction of the Make-It module is realized with recuperated materials and some personal investments from its initiator. Besides the Huis van de Commons brought in a subsidy of 10.000 euro<sup>6</sup> dedicated to physical investments. In this, a lot of energy and time is invested by Ivan –as the initiator of Make-It- and his dedicated group of builders, as well as by me and Martine. Where Ivan leads the hands-on building process, I am in charge of following up the administrative and strategic work to get the combined project officially recognized by the MSI and to obtain the therefore required building permit.

APPRECIATION / The creation of the Maison des Possibles is motivated by a strong desire to experiment a different way of producing our urban environment. Rather than sticking to the initial plan, both Make-It and the Huis van de Commons project saw benefit in working together. This collaboration resulted in an altered and merged project that benefits from the combined strengths as well as it enacts some additional challenges.

The design and construction of the Maison are determined by the recuperated materials at stock and depends highly on our human energy. The still on-going construction has been halted for several moments; to wait for the granting of a temporary building permit, or to wait for the dynamics on site to sort out, or -as is now the case- in expectation of how the negotiations with the MSI continue.

The MdP is positioned in definite relation to the other agents that are active in Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use. As a shelter, the structure is at their service as well as it looks to open up the creation process to these partners, amongst others by the organization of a "chantier ouvert" (open construction site).

The house aspires to offer a base for commoning initiatives at Josaphat, and more general in Brussels. Today the structure has been made temporarily wind tight, but has no lock and thus is open for diverse uses, allowing the commoners to find shelter during rain or too strong sunshine as it also serves as the location for loaded debates and the sharing of expertise and knowledge. As necessary, during winter its fire stove offers a cozy place for a get-together and conceals a sense of homecoming.

REFERENCES / In addition to the situated knowledges obtained through the design-based participatory action research: data 160523 – Commonshuis, data 160523 – Urban Innovation Lab, data 170310 – Make-It texte de presentation, (BRAL; Tremble, 2016).

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6 Donated by the King Baudouin Foundation, Urban Innovation Lab.

## 00.04.05 Josaph'Aire

In addition to the house-garden-and-kitchen tripartite that is made up by Re-cup'Kitchen, Jardin Latinis, and the Maison des Possibles, I want to highlight the somewhat invisible commoning that comes with these. In this section, I will discuss the "Josaph'Aire" (JA) nonprofit as a representation of this essential attribute of the self-proclaimed transitional uAD interventions at Josaphat. For this, I will follow the governance, space, program, support and appreciation framework and narrate four re-constructed lived experiences that show how we imagine, scout, construct and care for this commoning aspect.

**GOVERNANCE** / The Josaph'Aire nonprofit has as primary objective to support the civic initiatives at Josaphat and in doing, so JA defines Josaphat's use a zone of experimentation. This legal structure emerged in response to the MSI's demand to have one juridical entity as an interlocutor to set up an official agreement for the temporary use at Josaphat. Founding JA beginning 2017, the members and board aimed to represent the different communities that were active around Josaphat at that time amongst which the Jardin Latinis, Re-cup'Kitchen, Commons Josaphat and the Maison des Possibles. From the beginning on, the nonprofit was perceived to be more a tool than a goal or decision-making force. To strengthen the objective of horizontal decision-making, the nonprofit (vzw/asbl) has no president assigned.

However, today the civic scenery at Josaphat's ground has expanded, and new agents question the towards the MSI constructive approach that is embedded within the working of JA. The initiators of the Forum project –also situated at Josaphat's southwest corner- have explicitly distanced themselves from this organization, while the Jardin Latinis and fellow garden projects at Josaphat are hesitating to (still) take part in this structure as the conditions of the convention are still under negotiation.

Depending on how the conversation with the MSI will continue JA may find consolidation and legitimacy through a convention for temporary use. If not, the legal structure most likely will be dismantled.

**SPACE** / Josaph'Aire has its base located at the Josaphat site, however, from its very beginning, the bylaws state the organization does not necessarily limit its action to this ground.

**PROGRAM** / The JA nonprofit has as main objective to facilitate the sharing and learning between citizens as well as to support their actions and autonomy. For this JA advocates the right for urban experimentation and defines Josaphat -and the city in general- as a natural environment, an integrated and shared space, a laboratory for experimentation, a circular and transitional use, and a serene and convivial atmosphere. Humanity is JA's central concerns.

**SUPPORT** / The use and caretaking of the Maison des Possibles is attributed to JA. Moreover, through the organization of the "Jours des communs" human energy is invested on a recurring base. More recently the nonprofit obtained a subsidy of 13.200 euro from the VGC (Flemish Community Commission)<sup>10</sup> for the organization of the "FAIRE" event. Besides small financial support has been granted as JA was awarded the price of "Burgervuur" by De Wakker Burger (2018b).

10 Vlaamse GemeenschapsCommissie, subsidy is granted in the framework of the "Bruss-it" call.

APPRECIATION / Although the organization is relatively young and still in search of its legitimization and direction, it has received formal recognition (Burgervuur prize) and enjoys a broad interest -amongst others by Vicinia (2018b). Its creation was a pragmatic approach, and its current uncertain position is highly defined by the changing standpoints of the communities it aims to support. These tensions make JA unstable, yet at the same time this situation manifests the core ambition of JA; being at the service of Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use.

The creation of JA can be considered as a strategic step in a game of chess, which is still on-going. While maneuvering within the negotiation process for a convention, the organization's board and its grassroots support base aim to defend and recognize their autonomy and space of experimentation. JA -by its bylaws- states it acts in favor of and strong collaboration with its members. The shifting position and the action of JA are dependent on a broad and loosely organized community of civic agents.

In line with the main five principles the users of Josaphat have worked towards, JA positions Josaphat as a space of experimentation in active relation with its nature and nearby residents. Even more, the core objective of JA is to be at the service of these community-oriented and environmental agents.

JA brings together some of the self-proclaimed transitional uses in Josaphat and in doing so absorbs their interest to experiment other more generative ways of urban production, food production, and consumption and looks out to build a different more equal relationship between nature and the built. JA is driven by a constructive approach that reaches out to the MSI as the public owner and developer of the site.

REFERENCES / In addition to the situated knowledges obtained through the design-based participatory action research: data 170301 "Statuts Josaph'Aire asbl", (De Wakkere Burger, 2018b, 2018c; Tremble, 2016; Vicinia, 2018b).







00.04.fig.18 - Josaph'Aire represents the rather invisible commoning at Josaphat, March 2018.

## REC.2016.12.22 – Imagine: Writing the bylaws

We meet at a bar nearby Josaphat. An evening meeting, as usual as those who have a full-time job can join — having a tea or a beer. I recently came back from Turin and am catching up again on the current dynamics. Some new people have joined, things have shifted. Commons Josaphat has been continuing its political work, spreading their proposal, nudging the urban activism, meeting the MSI to present their work on the model building block and to discuss the not formally recognized, yet tolerated occupation of Josaphat.

The first question on the agenda for today is if we are willing to give in to the demand of the MSI to create one single juridical entity that they value as necessary to set up a convention for temporary use. There is tension in the air. We are reluctant to have to give in to the institutionalization the MSI imposes though this demand. On the other hand, we see the potential. So yes, let's do this. However, with caution. We are aware we also need to carefully consider how this will impact our governance. A juridical structure with a board should not jeopardize our ambition for shared governance and horizontal decision making. How can we write our bylaws in such a way they protect our commoning ambitions so that they facilitate and support the work on the ground?

The five principals we have written together can form the base of our shared vision and understanding. Josaphat as a natural environment, an integrated space “en commun”, a laboratory, a circular and transitional use, and an atmosphere of conviviality and serenity.

Let's remain deliberately vague. Ambiguity as a strategy. Let us not limit JA to ourselves nor Josaphat's perimeter. Let us state that the created nonprofit structure will be there to facilitate, to act according to what its members demand. Let us make this a tool to manifest our ambition to place humanity—including the environmental—back at the center, to advocate the practices of commoning. So yes, an “asbl”, but as a shell to support us and nurture us.

## REC.2017.05.21 – Scout: Setting out a parliament?

The bylaws have been written; the nonprofit is officially registered. Josaph'Aire is born. What does it entail? What is its consistency? Toha and I see a strong potential in what it could be. A tool at first, but also a structure that allows us to formalize, to obtain recognition from the top down. Maybe mainly for ourselves. To pinch us to self-organize more structurally.

It is a beautiful Sunday. Still a bit chilly but we can be outside. We enjoy a meal together with Recup'Kitchen in the open air of Josaphat. We chat lightly as we sit around the table. The debate is planned for later that day. To tease, I install a little seating corner: a recuperated mat, a purple blanket and a circle of orange cushions. I locate the conversation corner in front of the Maison des Possibles' bare wooden structure, not yet covered by a solid roof. We slowly assemble at our spot. We start to address the questions at stake. We have this nonprofit now, what do we do with it? Which meaning do we grant it? Toha and I have carefully prepared a proposal. I openly put it out on the mat (see 00.04.fig.19). Inspired by the working of the P2P Foundation as shared with me earlier by Michel Bauwens I introduce a three-part constellation:

1. Josaph'Aire as a community (above in 00.04.fig.19), its heart. An assembly that in a horizontal model makes decisions together. A regularly organized meeting in which everyone is welcome, and we work towards shared decisions considering important and strategic matters.

2. A group of independent initiatives (middle of 00.04.fig.19). A diversity of actors such as the Jardin Latinis and Recup'Kitchen. Open to integrate newcomers. Each functions in its own and takes their decisions and steers their agency. Only essential and strategic choices need the support of the JA assembly.

3. The juridical structure (below in 00.04.fig.19). A tool. There to help the assembly and the projects as a legal structure, as a means to receive subsidies or set up conventions.

The idea is appreciated but is also felt as too ambitious. A monthly meeting would be too demanding. Then who are we to grant ourselves the authority to set up governance to decide on what can and cannot happen at our corner of Josaphat? We have no official permission to be here, to take up this stewardship. Shall we take it step by step? Let's call in an assembly when we feel it is necessary, as we urgently need to discuss some matters.

My disappointment is big. I feel like we have skipped some steps in preparing the proposal. We ran and bypassed ourselves. We have been looking too many steps ahead, and we lost our support behind. Maybe, what I see is simply not shared. It is perhaps just my ambition, not in the interest of those that gathered with us around the carpet today? But I can still not shake off the feeling that here, we have missed an enormous opportunity; an opportunity to stabilize and recognize ourselves.

The meeting itself was a performative act of an assembly. And by discussing there and even by deciding we would take it more at ease, we established JA as a parliament one way or another. And although it might not have been my preferred outcome, we did make this decision together. In a circular setting, shared in what I still can read to be a commons governance. Maybe, in the first instance, we claim to wait and see what the future will bring us.

## REC.2018.01.14 – Construct: A day for the commons

Midday, we patiently wait as people arrive at Josaphat. It is a mild winter day. The cold air enforces Josaphat's tendency to offer a space to breathe. Some of us come with a pot of soup, I bring pesto made from Recup'Kitchen's food surpluses, someone else took care of the bread. We stand around the table. Taste. Chat. Discuss what tasks we would work on.

Today is our first "Jour des Communs". The previous JA assembly we have been talking about the need to take care of our collective space at Josaphat. There are the paths that get flooded during the winter, the wood that needs to be cut to keep the stove of the Maison going, the dry toilet that needs to be emptied, the waste that needs to be sorted, the compost that needs to be turned over... The list of tasks is there, and we figured out it would be more helpful to work on it together at a regular base. Josaph'Aire could represent this collective responsibility. So we ambitiously planned to meet every month to be hands-on to get some of the work done. Those with experience are present to share their way of working and knowledge with those willing to offer a hand. This day we would clean up a big part of our improvised storage space, get rid of those materials that

would not be useful to us after all. We cut up the shipping pallets ready to recuperate them as a resource for the stove. We dig to enlarge the pond. We close off by finishing the rests of the soup in our Maison. We warm ourselves at the stove that is fueled by the refilled stock of wood. In taking care, we have been building something together. This time, not any spatial structure. Nothing liking installing a kitchen, or making a house. But something very essential to the everyday. Something more ephemeral, but very much there. A commoning urban architectural design?

REC.2018.06.19 – Care: At the negotiation table

We are sitting at the terrace of a coffeehouse nearby the office of the MSI. Soon we are expected in their meeting room to discuss the convention we are negotiating. What is the point we want to make? And how do we best bring it across?

I find it hard to get a line in our arguments and discussions. We have spent numerous meetings discussing the proposed convention these last weeks. To discuss what we do not agree with. To look for how to continue constructively despite our suspicious distrust. We still try to bring out our diverse standpoints that seem impossible to align. Yet we can find a common motivation to continue the route, to negotiate the legal framework proposed to us. We are still ready to defend our space of civic freedom at Josaphat, to protect ourselves from recuperation. We are still searching for some sort of middle ground between those utterly opposed to what is planned and those more interested in influencing it.

We decide to start the meeting by bringing out our general arguments that I have tried to reassemble based on all the various inputs I have received these last weeks.

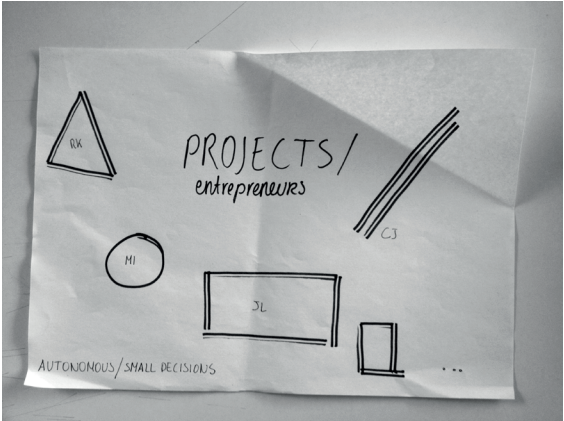
1. JA is a collectivity of whom we know it will be not possible to include all actors present on Josaphat today.

2. JA consists of a group with participants that have different ambitions, and as such we want to reduce the agreements in the convention to the bare essential minimum; being an agreement for temporary use.

3. We read this temporary use of Josaphat as a space for experimentation, freedom to cherish and to defend. Josaphat is a laboratory that we want to protect by questioning those articles in the agreement that to us feel too restrictive.

When it is time to go and meet the MSI, my heart is jumping. None of us has a clue what to expect. Maybe not all of us feel the same anxiety that I carry when entering the glass entrance hall. We all know one way or another we are in a weak position, yet we all know we are powerful and can stand firm. There is nothing that we will uncritically accept.

Yet I –with my ambitions and motives- see what there is to win and to lose, not just for Josaphat, but for the space and (relational) values of temporary/transitional use in general. I see what is at stake for the recognition of the urban commons and in (re)producing the city. I know the importance of this meeting for us as civic agents to figure out what we –all together then- stand for and how we will organize ourselves accordingly. In this negotiation process, I see a stepping stone; one that could pioneer civic-public cooperation in the making of our city. A collaboration in which I naively believe it can push us forward. A partnership of which my peers on the field watchfully advise me to be more skeptical towards.



00.04.fig.19 - The proposed organization structure for Josaph'Aire, May 2017.



00.04.fig.20 – The Maison des Possibles at Josaphat, under construction, December 2017.

# 00.05

## matters of concern A FIELD OF TENSION

*L'atlante del Gran Kan contiene anche le carte delle terre promesse visitate nel pensiero ma non ancora scoperte o fondate: la Nuova Atlantide Utopia, la Città del Sole, Oceana, Tamoé, Armonia, New-Lanark, Icaria.*

*Chiese a Marco Kublai: - Tu che esplori intorno e vedi i segni, saprai dirmi verso quali dis questi futuri ci spingono i venti propizi.*

*- Per questi porti non saprei tracciare la rotta sulla carta né fissare la data dell'approdo. Alle volte mi basta uno scorcio che s'apre nel bel mezzo d'un paesaggio inongruo, un affiorare di luci nella nebbia, il dialogo di due passanti che s'incontrano nel viavai, per pensare che partendo di lí metterò assieme pezzo a pezzo la città perfetta, fatta di frammenti mescolati col resto, d'istanti sepratati da intervalli, di segnali che uno manda e non sa che li raccoglie. Se ti dico che la città cui tende il mio viaggio è discontinua nello spazio e nel tempo, ora piú rada ora piú densa, tu non devi credere che si possa smettere di cercarla.*

- Italo Calvino (Calvino, 2012)



In this chapter, I will discuss the matters of concern considering urban architectural design (uAD) that are at stake around Josaphat's ground. I have described this ground, its condition as living lab at large and the design-based participatory action research that is situated there in chapter 00.03 "*Feet on the ground*". As architect-researcher, part of the commoners and architect-writer, I have in chapter 00.04 "*House-garden-and-kitchen stories*" focused on "three plus one" uAD interventions that make up the doctoral design practice. I have claimed that Recup'Kitchen (RK), Jardin Latinis (JL), the Maison des Possibles (MdP) and Josaph'Aire (JA) are to be considered as urban commons. I have conceptualized the whole of house-garden-and-kitchen with its underlying commoning as "commons architecture". In this, I will introduce some persona's to help me discuss the matters of concern that are at stake and how they build up something in Josaphat's air (00.05.03).

## 00.05.01 Josaphat, a happening place

In this section, I will claim Josaphat's ground is symbolic (00.05.01.a) for how uAD is currently (not) functioning today and how both civic as public agents search to improve urban development. As a symbolic ground, I will look at what is in friction around Josaphat (b) and build up my argument its situation is symptomatic for (c) an urban struggle that the Brussels citizens are already facing for a while.

### a. A symbolic ground for Brussels

The commons uAD practice that I have described in the previous chapter entails different interventions that each in their way –yet acting together- experiment commons-oriented approaches to making the city at Josaphat's ground. I see this commons practice to be highly related to the vision advocated by Commons Josaphat. At Josaphat's ground, hands-on civic uAD interventions and long term visioning articulate **a position on what the city could/should be like.**

Commons Josaphat laid the base by proposing innovative and generative ways of dealing with public space, housing, governance, nature and water management, mobility, health, etc. Their proposal for "*Josaphat en Common*" (2015b) has been translated to an "ilot modèle" or model building block that is created in interaction with the official masterplan –based on the only accessible yet already outdated information of the 2014 schematic masterplan<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the CJ platform envisions transitional use as an evident process in urban development and has as such actively supported it. To CJ, transitory use is the logic stepping stone in the incremental process to make the dreamt of commons neighborhood happen.

Recup'Kitchen brings awareness of food as a shared resource. RK aims to fight the by market mechanisms triggered waste of food. The project is self-sustaining through a solidarity economy. And as a spatial intervention, RK turns public space in an arena of social encounter and open debate. Through sharing and collective caretaking –cleaning

<sup>1</sup> See DATA.15.12.10 "Presentation Josaphat MS-a".

the dishes together, facilitating utilities and bringing together communities- RK manifests existential values. (Ezelstad, 2016; Recup'Kitchen, 2016).

The nomadic garden then focuses on restoring the direct contact with nature within the urban environment. Hands in the earth, the gardeners bring social cohesion and share knowledge on food production as they explore practices that boost biodiversity. More than a garden, the Jardin Latinis experiments everyday yet often overlooked aspects of urban life, such as managing water recuperation, composting, collective maintenance, communication in public space and more. The gardeners that connect to the "Forum des Potagistes et Jardiniers" mock the Brussels Capital Region's (BCR) "Good Food" program that aims to advocate and support local food production in Brussels. They find this campaign rather ironic as urban allotment gardens in Brussels are easily pushed away to make space for urban developments. Sometimes community gardens just are forced out without any clear motivation provided. The "Jardin Navez" and "Potamoes" gardens that have joined the Josaphat occupation in 2017, both had to leave their initial sites and found refuge at Josaphat. They wonder what place will be given to popular allotment gardens, permaculture, biodiversity, sustainable water management or urban agriculture in the upcoming Josaphat district.

The Maison des Possibles project is an experiment on how to provide an alternative housing solution –although this program is not implemented as such at Josaphat. The light and minimal structure experiments low tech building techniques and the use of recuperated materials. The house-like structure is a statement that the creation of housing can be citizen-driven and affordable without the need for significant capital investment to take over this process (Tremble, 2016). The commons-based programming of the Maison aims to strengthen the local communities and to incubate commoning processes in Brussels through debate, on-site permanences, open conversations and all sorts of convivial activities. The Mdp aims to be a building block for a commons-oriented urban development.

Also, Josaph'Aire is there to bring these –and other- agents together and support them in building an agreement with the MSI who is the public owner in charge of Josaphat's development. As a juridical structure, JA is a tool to federalize the various communities within Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use and to support them in their agency to imagine, scout, construct and take care of everyday innovations at Josaphat and beyond. This nonprofit embodies an ambition to strengthen the transitional potential of the relational values and opportunities I/we read in the Josaphat interventions. At the moment (June 2018), JA supports the Josaphat actors in their negotiation of the terms for a convention of temporary use that would formally recognize their presence at Josaphat.

Numerous of the current self-proclaimed transitional uses at Josaphat put in place **civic socio-spatial innovation**<sup>2</sup>. Taking advantage of Josaphat's awaiting status, they find the space to express and practice their vision and ambitions for the future of Brussels. The strategic position of Josaphat inevitably makes the reflections and imaginations embedded in the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions –commons architecture- stand in relation to what is at the drawing table.

Citizens do not stand alone in their search for innovation in urban production. Also,

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2 For the notion of "social innovation" and more particularly in the context of uAD, I relate to the lecture of Frank Moulaert he presented during the TRADERS autumn school, 12 November 2015. A recording of his lecture "Urban design and social innovation. The culprit of caring neoliberal urban policy?" can be consulted through: <http://traders.eu/traders-autumn-school-2015-full-lectures/#more>

public agents explore **new procedures in urban development** — this at least the case for the official planning mechanisms and tools at stake for Josaphat. To start with the MSI, as the Region's urban development corporation, had recently (July 2015) evolved from the MVV, the land acquisition corporation: a transformation that marks a shift in interest. The BCR's government through this move emphasizes the operational implementation of development plans for the Region over investment-oriented property acquisition. As a company of public interest, the MSI combines investments in Brussels development with an ambition to gain more control in urban production in favor of public interest (SAU/ MSI, 2016).

Moreover, the strategic planning of Josaphat is grounded in the restructuring of the Brussels planning instrument; the "Code Bruxellois d'Aménagement de Territoire" (Co-BAT, in Dutch BWRO<sup>3</sup>). The reform of this juridical base for urban and spatial planning in Brussels introduces new planning tools such as the "Richtplan van Aanleg" (RPA/ PAD<sup>4</sup>). The RPA allows for both a regulatory and strategic component in master planning, which should result in more flexibility along the planning and realization process. The in 2018 operationalized CoBAT is aimed to make the cumbersome administrative processes more agile and efficient (Perspective & SAU/ MSI, 2018).

Josaphat is one of the crucial areas of regional interest that is affected by this. Its planning process –initiated before 2014- has anticipated these new planning instruments –CoBat and RPA- that needs to define the design for significant regional developments. Being more strategy oriented the RPA lays out the major principles for the area at stake, while it at the same time sets down some essential regulations. For Josaphat, the RPA fixes the minimal and maximal building height, the minimum surface of green space, type of housing (with a for Brussels outstanding share of social housing), the aimed density, ambitions for water management, mobility organization... The goal is to create a framework to secure the planned objectives for Josaphat while still allowing for flexibility as the RPA needs to be further detailed and designed into solid master plans.

In this context of renewing planning instruments, the regional organization responsible for Josaphat's planning –the MSI- has introduced the novel procedure of a "competitive dialogue". Different to the general "marché public" (public procurement contracts) this selection procedure allows for more exchange between the to be assigned promotor and the MSI before to allocate them the development of Josaphat's first phase of 66.000m<sup>2</sup>. This dialogue aims to get more ambitious proposals from private promoters by putting them in competition. After the first-hand selection –beginning 2018- six private developers continue a competitive procedure in which at every phase they have to improve their proposal by assembling a team of experts, making up a solid business plan and elaborating the RPA into a robust masterplan. At this stage (June 2018) where six solid consortia of developers have been selected, the procedure demands to set up an interdisciplinary design team. This phase in the competitive dialogue is intended to push the architectural quality, innovation in environmental design and participatory processes as the competitive dialogue requests this know-how to be included.

Concerning the ambitions embedded within the competitive dialogue procedure, the choice has been made to divide Josaphat into three large zones for big scale development. This big lots would allow attracting more exciting players on the development market and, in extension, would lead to more qualitative results in the development.

3 Brussels Wetboek van Ruimtelijke Ordening. In Brussels the French abbreviation of CoBAT is also appropriated by Dutch speaking agents, for this reason I will use "CoBAT" to refer to this planning tool.

4 RichtPlan van Aanleg / Plan d'Aménagement Directeur.

In addition to these new planning procedures, Josaphat also illustrates an ambition of the Brussels Capital Region to impact on the future of Brussels by investing in the creation of (affordable) housing. In relation to Brussels' standards, the RPA defines a quite ambitious amount of social housing; out of the 45% of housing that will be public, 60% is oriented at a public with a social income (in total this makes up almost 25% of the housing) (SAU/ MSI, 2018b). Also, a window has opened for Community Land Trust (CLT) developments or developments with similar ground lease mechanisms (Perspective, 2018a).

As the process from planning to realization takes its time, the MSI also expresses an ambition to support **a gradual transformation for Josaphat**. The construction works for the first phase are at the moment (June 2018) planned to start earliest in 2020. With at least twelve years to bridge from the first works to the closure of the last construction site, a big window of opportunity is open for transitional use. The MSI addresses that activation of the site -preferably by community-oriented and non-commercial agents- can bring it to life. For this, the public operator promises to launch a public call for temporary use.

In the meanwhile, the MSI does not longer ignore the civic activities that have self-organized and got installed at Josaphat's southwest corner since early 2015. On their website, the MSI recognizes Josaphat as a "happening place" (SAU/ MSI, 2018a). The urban development corporation sees a potential to integrate the social cohesion and environmental activities set up by these civic actors in the future development (Perspective, 2018a). They currently try to canalize the existing "wild" uses (SAU/ MSI, 2018a).

As an area of regional interest and a pilot case of the MSI's new competitive dialogue procedure, **Josaphat symbolizes** how the Region looks at the future urban development of the city as well as how citizens use its ground to imagine their desired urban environment. If the MSI -with its official plans- and the Josaphat occupants -with their self-organized experimentations- actually can/could/should interact is unclear. With these new procedures and ambitions for Josaphat the BCR promises its citizens to take a step forward for Brussels' urban development. However, the struggling negotiations to set up a convention for the temporary use at Josaphat hint things are in friction.

## b. Some things are in friction

It is not all sunshine at Josaphat; the innovative dynamics on both the public and civic side seem to not always be in favor of one another. Even though these house-garden-and-kitchen uAD practices constructively aim to perform other ways of making the city, they as well challenge the Region's approach. To a bigger or lesser extent, they are critical of the novel procedures that do not show to deviate far off the **business as usual**.

To start with, Commons Josaphat mainly questions the ambition of the MSI to **sell off the publically owned land**. In their "*Josaphat en Commun*" (Commons Josaphat, 2015b) proposal they advocate that urban land in the first place makes up the daily livelihood of the Brussels citizens, more than it is a financial asset. Rather than selling off that what belongs to the community and passing it to the hands of the most competitive private promotor, CJ claims it is possible to have urban production out of speculative market mechanisms. Alternative financial schedules are possible through land lease mechanisms.

Their proposal for an “îlot modèle” is not being heard. Despite the architectural and financial plans they have created for this commons-oriented building block, there seems to be no place for a civic-public co-production in Josaphat’s first development phase. This experimental proposition is feared to delay the process and to augment the risks of an already challenging development scheme. In response to their proposal, CJ received the vague promise from the MSI to explore its feasibility in Josaphat’s second development phase (Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Parlement, 2017). First, the competitive dialogue and related large scale development have to proceed.

Despite their activism and lobby work, CJ still has to witness how the future Josaphat district risks to be endangered by a search for short term financial gain. In the novel planning tools, the ambition for more efficiency is felt to be at the cost of citizen participation (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017), let be co-creation (IEB, 2018a). Josaphat’s ground-claimed as a commons lab- seems to be just another example of the on-going commercialization and commodification of Brussels (Van Garsse, 2015).

Recup’Kitchen, Jardin Latinis, and the Maison des Possibles are in general more silenced in the public debate considering Josaphat. Partly because they are more grounded in the actual practice, yet also because they are in a fragile position as they benefit from the MSI’s tolerance towards their presence on Josaphat. However, they in their way also aim to challenge the unbalanced power relations that are imposed when it comes to Josaphat’s future. As activist statements, these interventions have claimed their place at Josaphat’s southwest corner and take up the right to propose and act differently. They manifest that housing can be realized without significant investments, that communities can envision and build their own city, that nature should be given its space, that food production and consumption are inherently part of the urban, that other economies are feasible etcetera.

They act with the ambition to maybe integrate into what will/could be there in the future city. Though, they oppose what the eroding of public space and the loss of another open natural area in Brussels. A quote from one of the leading actors describes the attitude of these local actors quite well. In an interview with the local media (Otten, 2017) Mathieu expresses his point of view considering the planned development of Josaphat: *“I don’t know what will happen in five years. But it is possible to create other urban developments. Having more nature in the neighborhood is possible. It’s also important to have a common vision for the city.”*

Josaph’Aire in this takes up a supporting role. The “Jour Josaph’Aire dag” organized in June 2017 brought together the Josaphat’s agents with neighbors and Brussels activists to discuss how the whole of self-proclaimed transitional uses could be strengthened. The concluding debate made it explicit; there is a crucial task to be performed in dialogue with those in power of Josaphat’s future. Today -in the negotiation of a convention for temporary use- the nonprofit finds itself at the defense of more freedom -in experimentation and speech for Josaphat’s communities. It is only the **question if the imposed hierarchy leaves space for a civic-public collaboration**. The MSI states that as long as the RPA has not been made operational –and thus the big outlines are already being fixed-, it is still too early to work together with local actors (Perspective, 2018a). On the civic side, the willingness to collaborate with the MSI is overshadowed by the unease to contribute to a development hunger that sacrifices an open space with highly valuable natural and community interest.

However, the here mentioned urban activists are not the sole actors that remark flaws

in the on-going planning and development process of Josaphat. Fellow agents installed at Josaphat's southwest corner also raise their voices. Adjacent to the house, garden and kitchen stands the "Forum": a round-shaped structure built from recuperated shipping pallets that aims to be a civic parliament (see 00.05.fig. 1). The self-built structure is designed by the architect Gaspard Van Parys and embodies a more provocative approach towards the MSI. The agents behind the Forum question the ownership and authority of this regional development corporation. The Forum makes the statement that Josaphat is a commons and that as such, it is up to citizens to be entirely in charge of its future. The creators of the Forum go so far in favor of civic autonomy that they have distanced themselves entirely from the JosaphatAire community –which I believe to be somewhat in contradiction with their commons-oriented ambitions. They are highly critical of JosaphatAire's openness to dialogue with the MSI.

Josaphat is regularly frequented by a community of naturalists that for years have been following the growing biodiversity in fauna and flora with an attentive eye. Both in on-site conversations as publicly in the media (Ezelstad, 2018; Sente, 2018), the naturalists bring up **the loss of natural environment** the Josaphat development brings –despite the MSI's sensitivity to this matter. In general for Brussels, these naturalists (natagora Bruxelles, 2015) work on sharing their knowledge on how to enable the presence of birds and insects. To them, it is evident this advice needs to be incorporated into the creation of what is promised to become a sustainable neighborhood. Though, if they were able to choose, Josaphat should be preserved as natural environment. After all in Brussels, an abundance of vacant offices provides an alternative to answer the housing crisis.

In addition to the actors present at Josaphat, also the surrounding neighborhoods have awakened as they are shaken up by what they call "pharaonic" plans (Comité de site Josaphat, 2017a). Plans which they feel are coming down on them as a "mastodont" (giant) that threatens their everyday environment (Perspective, 2018b). More emotionally bound to the Josaphat site and its surroundings, neighbors, have launched multiple actions -among which a petition - to express their concerns (Comité Terdelt asbl, 2017). Grouped as "Comité de site Josaphat" (Comité), these activists come together in their struggle to gain a say in the planning process. In their communication to the MSI, they express their frustration addressing the lack of information, let be any participation.

Until the launch of the reformed CoBAT and the presentation of the RPA of Josaphat, the residents had only been actively informed in December 2015 through a public presentation of the schematic plans<sup>5</sup>. This information session to them had come across as "fait accompli" (accomplished fact) (Comité Terdelt asbl, 2017). They not only criticize the plans but mainly the attitude of the regional development corporation (Comité de site Josaphat, 2017a).

Bounding over their concerns and driven by their frustration to not be sufficiently informed -let be to have a say- the neighborhood committee launched a petition (online supported by 822 people with additional signatures on paper) to **challenge the plans at stake and the way the process is taking place** (Comité de Site Josaphat, 2017b). Also, the Comité disseminated their statements in the media, and asked for arrests in the regional parliament as well as in the municipality of Schaarbeek and Evere, to reflect their concerns (Comité de site Josaphat, 2017a; Comité Terdelt asbl, 2017; Otten, 2017). The sustainable ambitions of the Josaphat project are in their protest cynically mocked by

<sup>5</sup> Beginning 2017, the neighbors had in addition received information –more passively- via leaflets and the set up of a website dedicated to provide information on the future project.





00.05.fig. 1 – The Forum during its construction, a collective work, October 2017.





00.05.fig. 2 – Protest poster of the Comité “Let us breathe!”, September 2018.

changing the slogan “*Josaphat. Living and working in a parking*” (see 00.05.fig. 2).

Their petition statement starts with a declamation of comprehension for the need to urbanize Josaphat to tackle the housing crisis in Brussels. However, they are opposed to the current plans as for them they lack a correct sustainable vision. Their first concern is the lack of information and concertation. Secondly, the Comité brings up the over-densification of the new district. They claim the program of 1600 housing units is disproportioned to the surrounding neighborhoods and at risk to cause many nuisances that will endanger the quality of life. One of the comments on the online petition expresses it subtly: “*Je trouve cela honteux de (...) construire encore des cages à poules pour humains!!!*” (Comité de Site Josaphat, 2017b).

As a third aspect, the petition addresses a lack of innovative vision on mobility, which is a general and severe issue in Brussels that is plagued by massive traffic congestions. The Comité does not see any sustainable response to this matter within the proposed plans as these still assume private car use to be the primary means of transportation. Subsequently, the Comité challenges the amount of social housing which is much higher than the surrounding neighborhoods. Together with the insufficient amount of services and the impermeability of the terrain they address their fourth concern; the planned Josaphat district will pollute the environment (sound, visual and ground). The Comité fears that the over-densification will be at the cost of qualitative green space while risking the general quality of life.

The petition concludes with **a call for a more human city** where the inhabitants -the current ones and the newcomers- can genuinely participate and are positioned at the core of the debate (Comité de site Josaphat, 2017a).

The concerns of the local inhabitants and the work of the community initiatives evolving around Josaphat –with Commons Josaphat as the most polemic one- have had their effects and triggered a debate in the Regional Parliament. In April 2017 and repeated in April 2018, the Minister-President of the Brussels Capital Region was asked to account for several issues considering the development of Josaphat. Building on the petition launched by the Comité de site Josaphat the questions of the interlocutors mainly revolve around the lack of concertation and information, the over-densification and the mobility issue. Taking into account the concerns of the Comité, the interlocutors claim that the Josaphat development is in the hands of the government, being both the owner of the site as well as in charge of its planning process (Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Parlement, 2017, 2018).

The interlocutors demand clarity about the ambition to sell the land and to take in concern the opportunity to maintain it in ground lease. They also address the presence of grassroots initiatives –mentioning Commons Josaphat and the on-site actors- and demand the government to welcome their innovative and constructive ideas, which seems to be ignored. The interlocutors ask how the government plans to act and integrate novel housing typologies such as a Community Land Trust and intergenerational housing as is proposed by the grassroots initiatives. Many of these questions have been first brought up in 2017 and then relaunched in 2018. This year the arrests resulted in a vague engagement of the Region to create space for such innovative ideas, though at earliest in the second development phase of Josaphat (Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Parlement, 2017, 2018).

In the Parliament, the government is challenged to not only inform but also include both residents as the active bottom-up scene in the planning and development process

of Josaphat. The interlocutors revoke the government's attitude to diminish citizens' concerns as NIMBY behavior. Instead, they claim that for Josaphat to become an actual model project, **citizens need to be included in the process when there is still space to have an impact**. Why has the government of the BCR not defined the ambitions, stakes, and challenges for Josaphat together with its citizens? One of the interlocutors brings up that also the "Bouwmeester" (chief architect) has brought up numerous ideas to involve people from an early stage. Also, it is claimed that the proposals that have been delivered by CJ should be taken into account. Through their vision and motion, the CJ community suggests a way of working that can generate added value and reassure the worried neighbors. To conclude one of the interlocutors states that including locals might be more complicated, but is crucial to render the future Josaphat neighborhood alive and integrated into its surrounding. (Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Parlement, 2017).

To conclude the lists of arguments evoked within the Region's parliament, criticism raises on the closed-door decision-making. Josaphat's **planning has been firmly kept in the hands of the MSI**, which both is the owner of the site as well as the actor in charge of making the masterplan as well as the MSI is responsible for its operational implementation. To add up to this planning monopoly, the MSI works by order of the Region's government, which is the authority that is responsible for approving the RPA. The claimed lack of participation reaches to such an extent that also the mayor of Schaarbeek –one of the two municipalities at which the Josaphat site is situated- expresses his frustration not to be sufficiently informed about Josaphat's planning process (Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Parlement, 2018).

Furthermore, Josaphat also serves as exemplary case **in the media** to address a lack of any actual participation in Brussels' new planning instruments. The recently operationalized framework of the CoBAT and the RPA have not helped to soften the frictions. Since the CoBAT got pushed through, Perspective –the Region's center of expertise and initiator of development strategies for the Brussels territory- is about to launch numerous RPAs at once. In the "*week of the big urban projects*", ten important development projects for Brussels have been presented during six open days. A "participatory" procedure that is criticized for being terribly close to a mere information campaign (Collectif des signataires, 2018). After these participation moments, a public inquiry will follow for each RPA in which citizens can contest and ask the deciding committee to push for change. A procedure that sticks to the already established consultation mechanisms within Brussels uAD. Did the reform of the CoBAT not miss a crucial opportunity to enforce more far-reaching and democratic ambitions for urban planning (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017)?

The urban activism scene in Brussels is profoundly worried about the **drawback the new procedures trigger considering civic participation** in urbanism. "*Are we going to make the city without people?*" (Collectif des signataires, 2018). The reformed CoBAT's hunger for more efficiency and flexibility is suspected to be more in favor of private interest (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017). After all the new competitive dialogue procedure oriented at finding a private promotor for Josaphat has already started while collaboration with civic actors is judged as too early. Citizens have to wait for the RPA to pass the administrative procedures and become operational (Perspective, 2018a).

Perspective and the MSI might have taken the effort to publicly present their plans in their week of big urban projects, the actual plans, nor the environmental impact studies

6 Translation from French by author.

are made accessible so far (June 2018). This in spite of the fact these plans are already at a final stage, they only will be made available for the public at the launch of the public inquiry for the RPA (for Josaphat planned for October 2018). Just another illustration of the limited transparency.

Since the public presentation of the –by now already altered- schematic masterplan in December 2015, some of the agents of the Comité de Site Josaphat have been actively in search for more information. They were left over to a Kafkaesque endeavor contacting the numerous governmental bodies that are involved. Most of the times their request to get access to the plans remained unanswered. Only with the help of Transparentia -an organization supporting citizens in their quest to access supposedly publicly available documents- the activist neighbors received the environmental impact study for Josaphat (Perspective, 2018b). What they got was a document of over 1500 pages, already outdated.

End 2017, with the competitive dialogue procedure being launched, also –yet secondarily- laypeople could get access to the documents intended for the candidate promoters. The cumbersome process necessary to get there didn't help to cool down the frustration. To add on, at the verge of obtaining access to this part of the information, people need to sign a term and agreements that states they cannot publish nor share any of the content. The over 300 pages of information cannot be downloaded and is to be read directly from the website.

There **seems to be some secret to Josaphat's RPA**. And while private developers are offered the needed information to start to shape their proposal for Josaphat's future, citizens scrap together the bits and pieces of information out there. The public presentations –as Perspective defined as “participation moments”- of the Josaphat RPA made it painstakingly clear; the Region offers two moments –during working hours- for citizens to come and listen to a presentation of the already established plans at stake.

In response a collectively written statement “*Faire la ville sans les gens?*” (Collectif des signataires, 2018) shouts out **what they feel to be wrong with how urban planning in Brussels works today**, they call for another way of producing the city. It is an expression of the aspiration for a more humane city. An ambition that is already translated into practice by numerous citizens and associations and that reveals the need and desire to take into hands the definition and organization of the city.

### c. A familiar struggle in Brussels

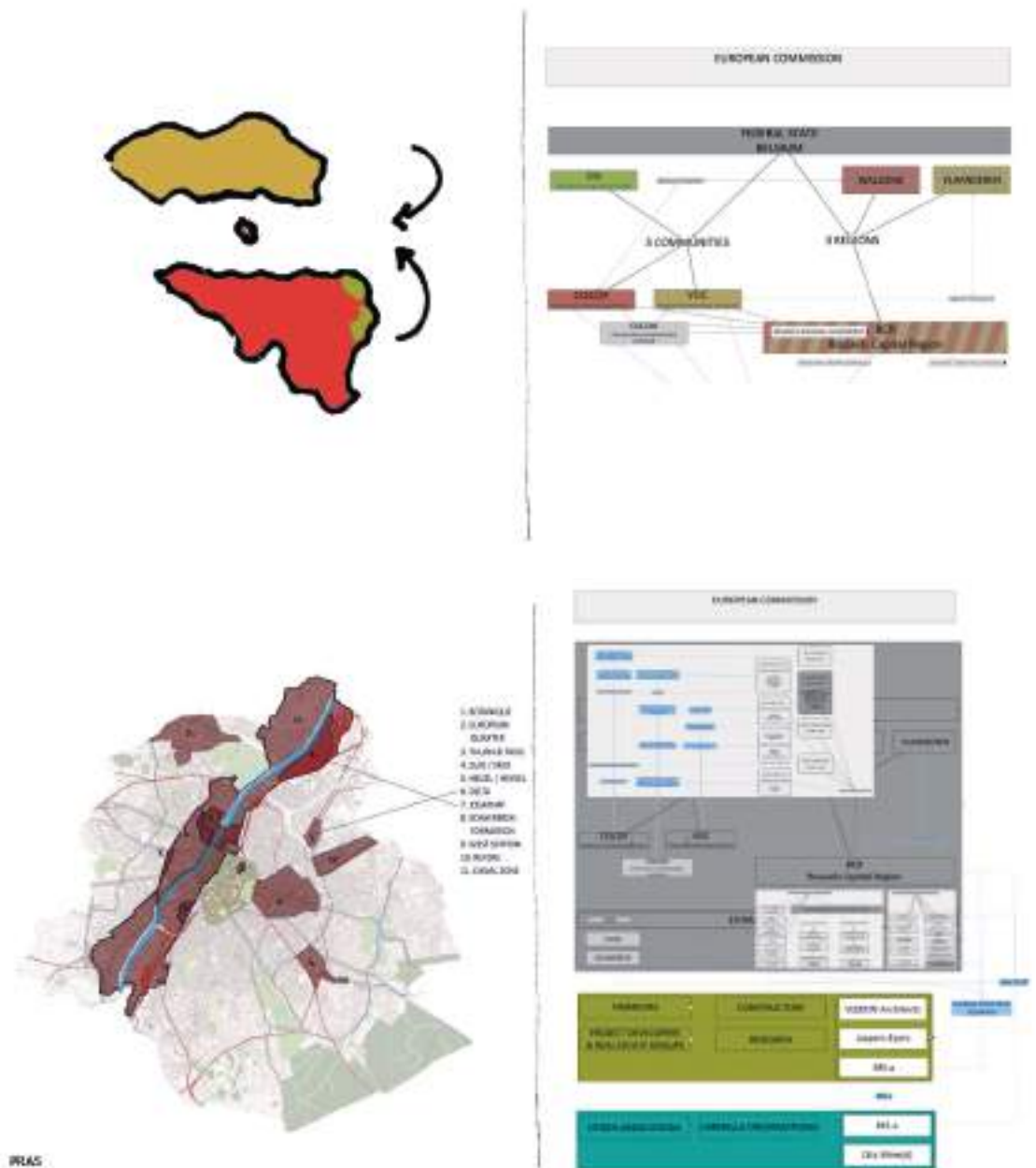
Josaphat -as symbolic ground defining the future of Brussels- illustrates some things in contemporary uAD are in friction. Its situation is symptomatic for the tensions between the concerns, desires, and dreams of citizens and the Brussels' planning machine. A struggle that is not unfamiliar to the Brussels Capital Region and her citizens.

To set the tone, Isabelle Doucet (2015) her book, “*The Practice Turn in Architecture: Brussels after 1968*” provides a nice account of **Brussels as the challenging city it is**. Brussels is complex in its administration with a multi-layered governance structure and its multilingual condition. Brussels is a capital city that is geographically contested, and which houses prestigious institutions in relation to or in disconnection from its numerous minorities. “*Brussels has a love-hate relationship with architecture, and architecture struggles to love it back*” (Doucet, 2015c, p. xix).

Doucet (2015c) retraces the recent urban developments in Brussels, studying “*the tensions between urban politics, architectural imaginations, society’s needs and desires, and the city’s history and fabric*”. These tensions electrify Josaphat’s air. These tensions strongly relate to Brussels’ rich legacy of urban activism and as such provide a (historical) contextualization of where we stand with Josaphat today. It is crucial to understand Brussels’ particular and complex planning organization –the “**Brussels circus of agents**” (Doucet, 2015c). The Brussels Capital Region (BCR), is an offspring of the Belgian double federal government system. Many delicate nuances and compromises are at stake in the complex organization of Belgium. The country is governmentally divided into three Communities and three Regions. In which the BCR offers a territory for both the Flemish (VGC) and French-speaking (COCOF) Community. Being the result of many compromises, the BCR is a bilingual region at city scale (see 00.05.fig. 3). The Region is responsible for territorial matters –public transport, housing, urban development- while the Communities concern people matters –education, culture and the like. Within the BCR, 19 municipalities make up the local governance, which for some issues have more authority than the Region.

For Josaphat, the regional MSI and Perspective are in charge of its overall planning and development, yet the realization of schools and a sports hall embedded within this RPA are projects for which the municipalities are responsible. As to add on to the complexity, Josaphat’s ground is situated at the territory of two municipalities –Schaarbeek and Evere. An attentive eye can trace this administrative boundary in Josaphat’s plans. The BCR’s complex governmental constellation results in a renowned amalgam of planning institutions and organisms that impact on its uAD. Only for Josaphat’s twelve organizations are on the map –not yet taking into account the upcoming private actors (Perspective & SAU/ MSI, 2018). To start there are (1) the MSI and (2) Perspective working for (3) the BCR. They work together with other regional administrations such as (4) Leefmilieu Brussel, (5) Citydev, (6) het Brusselse parkeeragentschap, (7) Brussel mobiliteit, (8) het woningfonds and (9) de sociale huisvestingsmaatschappij. These regional actors are complemented by the two related municipalities of (10) Schaarbeek and (11) Evere. And to conclude (12) Beliris joins in, a federal institution dedicated to Brussels. The presence of Beliris already gives it away. Brussels as Capital-Region cannot be seen independent from the other regional and communal governments of Belgium. Neither can it be disconnected from its European interest. The proliferation of governments, administrations and the outside interests for such a restrained territory make Brussels -as an actual urban territory- to be highly fragmented and complex to govern (Corijn & van de Ven, 2013; Deschouwer, 2012; T’Jonck, 2012). Brussels uAD is made by a complex “circus of agencies” (Doucet, 2015c, p. 240). Not only the public actors– in all their fragmentation and entanglement- impact on Brussels urban development, there are more actors involved in the eventual decision-making and planning processes. Interest groups of all sorts; the private sector, residents, users, a variety of research institutions and architectural organizations, etcetera. They all join the governmental institutions in making the city. Brussels is also defined by her civic associations, and private developers, design offices with an established reputation and/or good connections tend to impact strongly. All of these actors intrude urban policies –both at the regional and local level- and through this add up the complexity of the Brussels web (Pak & Verbeke, 2011).

This Brussels circus of agents makes uAD quite a challenge and has long allowed for a



00.05.fig. 3 – A schematization of the governmental organization considering Brussels, January 2015.





00.05.fig. 4 – Protest poster by BRAL.



destructive attitude toward urban development. Inspired by the modernist movement of the CIAM congresses and the economic potential of large scale redevelopment; architects, urban planners, and urban developers had drastically restructured significant parts of the city. A practice so widespread and powerfully present in Brussels that it claimed its own name: “**Brusselization**” (Brusseliseren / Bruxellisation) (Dessouroux & Puissant, 2008; Doucet, 2012, 2015c; Evert Lagrou, 2000; Pak & Verbeke, 2011; Van Reusel, De Clerck, et al., 2015). A concept that stands for the profit-driven destruction of the city and has originally been defined by Dessouroux & Puissant (2008, p. 114) – translated by Doucet (2012)– as following; “*Bruxellisation is associated with an overall sensation of powerlessness ‘vis-à-vis transformations of which [inhabitants] are either the victim or witness’, and with urban politics ‘at the service of real-estate developers’*”. In the modern era, time and time again money was chosen over heritage, peoples’ habitats and livelihoods were –under the guise of modern innovation– shamelessly destroyed for the commercialization of the city for huge infrastructural changes. Apart from the physical scars these urban interventions left behind in the fabric of the city, they resulted in urban trauma’s that still act in the collective consciousness today. Brussels citizens tend to be aware and highly suspicious of new and large scale urban developments (Doucet, 2015b; Gatzios, 2017; Pak & Verbeke, 2011; Van Reusel, De Clerck, et al., 2015).

Apart from a strong sense of loss, this Brusselization triggered the emergence of numerous **resistance movements** by citizens. A legacy of urban activism found its roots here and instigated the rise of three established organizations that still today are actively looking to challenge the rigorous and profit-driven development of Brussels. As “anti-modernists” (Evert Lagrou, 2002, pp. 38-39) these umbrella organizations strive to support citizens in their search to enable the livability of their city.

The “Atelier de Recherche et Action Urbaines” (ARAU) has its roots in the counter movement to resist the further razing of the Marolles neighborhood. ARAU was founded by architects –among which Maurice Culot–, a sociologist and a theologian. While standing in active relation with local action committees, this association aimed to challenge functionalist architecture and urban planning and the destructive impacts it had on the city. While fighting for a more democratic urban development, this movement questioned the modernist doctrine in uAD (Doucet, 2015c).

In its struggle, ARAU was complemented by two sister associations, the French-speaking “Inter-environnement Bruxelles” (IEB) and the Dutch-speaking “Brussels Raad voor het Leefmilieu” (BRAL). Both support citizen activism within a more comprehensive environmental perspective. After 40 years in the field, today IEB is renowned for its critical stance going against big and threatening developments and planning mechanisms that favor financial gains over the quality of life in Brussels. BRAL joins IEB and ARAU in their critical review and controlling function with a focus on keeping an eye on public and private development mechanisms. This association also has a significant contribution in supporting local governments and citizen groups to work together and establish participation in the (re)generation of Brussels (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017; ARAU, IEB, BRAL, et al., 2017; Doucet, 2015c; Van Reusel, Descheemaeker, Verbeke, & De Brant, 2017; Van Reusel, Pak, Van Meerbeek, & Verbeke, 2015).

The strong activist legacy considering city making contributed to several administrative and **planning mechanism to support participation** in urbanism. After the ’68 activist movement, the operationalization of the Sector Plan in 1979 installed moments

of public inquiry making it possible for citizens to impact on the proposed plans (Doucet, 2015c; Levy, 2013; Moritz, 2009). Brussels history of strong urban activism has had its effect on Brussels uAD. The city's reputation as playground for profit-driven development has eroded, yet -as Josaphat illustrates- work is still to be done.

As participatory mechanisms in Brussels urban planning gradually improve, other planning instruments favor private and economic development. Not at least for the CoBAT one of the main criticisms -voiced by ARAU, IEB, and BRAL (2017)- addresses the narrowing down of participatory processes in planning procedures. While these novel tools compensate the slow and challenging procedures that large scale developments in Brussels have to face, citizens receive no support in their challenge to hurdle through Brussels complex bureaucracy and culture of behind-closed-doors made trade-offs (BRAL, 2017b; IEB, 2017).

Though, the CoBAT does not stand alone; also the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (GPDO/PRDD) is being challenged. This plan is aimed to provide a vision for the whole Region in the long term. It has received thousands of remarks from citizens, associations and government institutions. These have informed a harsh review from the Regional development commission that resulted in a negative report not approving this plan. The Regional plan for sustainable development illustrates a lack of clear vision and ambition for the BCR, the plan seems more a real estate catalog and lacks to sufficiently tackle crucial issues such as education, safety, and culture (ARAU, IEB, BRAL, et al., 2017; Gatzios, 2018). Massive expulsions and the razing of entire neighborhoods -erasing the livelihood and habitat of its residents- are out of the picture now, yet Brusselization still earns its title. Urban development in Brussels is still in friction, not at least with her lively community of urban activists. ARAU, IEB, and BRAL still have their hands full supporting citizens in challenging the increasing power of neoliberal market mechanisms.

Not only at Josaphat voices are increasingly rising to criticize **the commodification of everyday livelihoods**. Private developments -such as the Marina project- that aim to build high-end housing in one of Brussels' most precarious neighborhoods get a green light. In spite of the massive civic criticism -enforced by the BCR's Bouwmeester-, the absurd socio-economic implantation, and the general awareness that this project is far off sustainable, the plans for luxury housing gain approval and remain on the table. Too bad the planned yacht basin will be in the way of the Region's ambition to create a bicycle highroad. In favor of urban investment, this path can easily be diverted. (BRUZZ, 2017a, 2018). The list of similar contested projects is long (IEB, 2018b).

As big private urban development is still in charge, the lively civic scene looks for a **way out in temporary/self-proclaimed transitional use** -a gap that provides space and time for community-driven uAD to counteract. Thriving off the for the market -at that moment- unprofitable land or buildings; civic actors, communities and social organizations find affordable space in which the legal and regulatory flu allows for a rare free zone to experiment and innovate (De Smet, 2013).

Creative and not always hundred percent legal solutions can also be found at numerous other initiatives than those of Josaphat; affordable housing (123 Logements, La Poissonerie, SWOT-mobile, WoonBOX), urban experimentation (Allee du Kaai), gardening, food production and cooking (Parckfarm), community centers and workshop spaces (La Serre, Au Quai) to name a few. Not only at Josaphat, in the whole of Brussels, something is simmering in the air today.

It is car-free Sunday in Brussels, the one day a year cyclists and pedestrians take over in our otherwise by car traffic dominated Brussels. The sunny weather and abundance of activities that take place make people massively go out in the streets, which are filled with an atmosphere of excitement and joy.

At Josaphat, the neighbors grouped as the “Comité de Site Josaphat” use this opportunity to organize a discussion around the planned development of Josaphat, and more particularly its mobility. It is one of their key concerns (see 00.05.fig. 2).

I am enthusiast the residents have organized their event at our corner of Josaphat. The transitional use is not just ours and is increasingly creating connections with the surrounding neighborhoods. Although I am personally not in favor of strong counter statements and try to avoid loud and too simplified arguments, I have to reckon they have a point. Josaphat as a model project with sustainable ambitions fails big time when it comes to her mobility scheme. Although going for the minimal amount of parking spaces, it seems to be very much business as usual. Not only at Josaphat, I feel the frustration. In anticipation of the situation to improve itself, our governments, in general, keep on holding on to private car use.

On the program for today; a presentation of our actions and stance, a guided tour in Josaphat wonderful nature, a debate in the arena of the Forum (see 00.05.fig. 5) and to conclude a participative meal offered by Recup’Kitchen.

As usual debate blends in every activity. Throughout the nature walk, I can hear people sigh: “How can it be we will sacrifice this nature?” “And then especially for plans that are not even truly sustainable!”

In the unfinished round structure of the Forum, my fellow activists and I present what we do and what our motivations are. Our visitors have appropriated the of shipping pallets made a structure that is still half of a construction site. I stand uneasily in the middle of the circle as I cannot avoid turning my back to people. But the dynamic is there, and the one-directional presentation smoothly changes into an open “roundtable” conversation. The gathered community of neighbors, interested people and urban activists here do not need much to fire up the debate.

*“Why does this open piece of land –slowly being reclaimed by nature- needs to make space for such over-densified neighborhood?”*

*“You know, before the crisis, they had made plans for an ecological neighborhood. It never got realized though.”*

*“Why don’t they start from these plans and ambitions for Josaphat’s future?”*

*“We barely know what the government is planning for the upcoming district here! What will the impact be on our everyday environment, considering sound, air pollution, traffic congestion? We don’t know...”*

*“You know, even before the plans for an ecological neighborhood, we had to face plans to realize an expo here! As neighbors, we strongly contested and managed to gain the support of the government. We had won that fight. We should stand for our rights again.”*

*“They told us we have to keep on raising our voices. We need to be that little stone in their shoe that at every step they take reminds them that we are there.”*

## REC.2017.10.25 – European Commons Assembly, Right to the city workshop

I have joined fellow architects, researchers, artists, hackers, journalists, activists, etc. that have traveled from all over Europe (and beyond) to Medialab Prado in Madrid. Each of us focuses on different aspects of urban life such as housing, public space, and culture. We have gathered in a circle to take part in the working group on the “*Right to the City*” organized by the European Commons Assembly (ECA). There are a lot of familiar faces, and a lot of us represent renowned commons-oriented initiatives. The professional facilitator dedicated to our group tries to steer us within the planned exercises, but it is clear most of us already know damn well why we came here. Each of us takes part in one or more collectives that saw light in response to a certain sense of emergency. Each in our European city –and even outside the EU- see and feel the effects of the (urban) land grab, the eroding contact with our natural environment, the pressing commercialization and privatization of public and common lands, the struggle to maintain or obtain access to affordable housing... The conversations are passionate, with a high sense of frustration as we become more and more aware of the scope of our struggle. A significant amount of the properties in our European cities are said to be in the hands of investors from Russia or Abu Dhabi. At a local level, the majority of us are facing the threat of eviction from the lands and buildings we are (temporarily) using. Time and time again public actors show to choose money over the socio-ecological value that we so cherish in our grouped civic initiatives. We each deal with our local urban struggle, but it becomes overly clear; this is a transnational battle.

## REC.2015.to.18 – Some evidence

° In Madrid, ten thousands of people were evicted from their homes in 2014. For the whole of Spain each day, almost a hundred families lose their house (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2015).

° In Brussels thousands of people went out in the street for the “Hart boven Hard / Tout autre Chose” parade. Demanding a more solidarity society, they join voices to signal to the government that people don’t want to be victimized to an economic model of which they feel it is running up against its limits (De Greef, 2017).

° The Brussels “Bouwmeester / maître architecte” openly criticizes the poor quality of the projects developed by the Brussels real estate sector. They collaborate too often with architecture offices that are known for their efficient and pragmatic work. The result is a “colorless, aseptic architecture” without a soul (De Sloover, 2017).

° A redevelopment of the iconic WTC tower in the Brussels North area should re-animate its eroded neighborhood life. Its modernist redevelopment during the ’60s resulted in a mono-functional office area that dies out after the office hours (Gatzios, 2017).

° 1200 people signed a petition against the marina project planned for one of Brussels most precarious neighborhoods. Citizen movements question the project that serves the interest of a private developer at the expense of public interest (BRUZZ, 2018).

° The Brussels “Parckfarm” project wins the price for public space 2015 (Prijs Publieke Ruimte). Going in against the idea of blueprint development the temporary farm is honored for its active involvement of local inhabitants (BRUZZ, 2015).



00.05.fig. 5 – Our neighbors meet at Josaphat at the occasion of the carfree Sunday, September 2017.

00.05.fig. 6 – Meeting for the right of the city at the ECA assembly in Madrid, October 2017. Photo by ECA.



00.05.fig. 7 – Drawn report of the ECA in Madrid, October 2017. Drawing by Josune Urrutia @mirardibujando.



## 00.05.02 Something is wrong

After addressing Josaphat as a symbolic ground around which frictions emerge that are not unfamiliar to Brussels urban activists, I here would like to dig more into what is going wrong in contemporary uAD as it manifests at Josaphat. At Josaphat's happening place I see the work of the generalized figure of "Economic Man" (00.05.02.a). In succession of this caricature, I will create the persona of "Modern Architect" to aid me in my discussion on what is now that feels so wrong.

### a. Our society is built on Economic Man

The concerns addressed around Josaphat show some things are in friction with how uAD happens in Brussels. Despite the Region's effort to set up novel planning mechanisms, these innovations show to have many flaws still. They do not leave space for commons-oriented initiatives to find a place in this process. Josaphat does not only seem to be symbolic for how the future of Brussels is envisioned, but its ground also appears **symptomatic for certain frictions Brussel's urban (re)generation is struggling with.**

Looking at the Brussels Capital Region's (BCR) particular complex circus of agents and history of Brusselization, the reform of the CoBAT and the re-organization of planning organizations –such as the creation of the MSI in 2015- seem to be a step forward as they aim efficiency and agility in urban planning. The legacy of urban activism –embodied by actors such as ARAU, IEB, and BRAL (2017)- triggers a suspicious awareness that this innovation seems to be **more in favor of urban investment than supporting citizens** and associations in looking to co-create their everyday environment.

A similar critical attitude can be found in the work of civic agents active around Josaphat. Commons Josaphat explicitly questions the need to sell off public land to private developers and to, as such, leave the development of the city over to the rule of the market. In the first instance, Brussels is in need of affordable housing, preferably to be taken out speculation mechanisms. The gardeners and naturalists claim Josaphat's value as nature zone, and the open landscape is unnecessarily being sacrificed for an urban development hunger. As many buildings in Brussels are vacant, the Region's argument to augment the housing stock by building an entirely new district on a still open surface seems to be out of place. The Recup'Kitchen team then, through their actions claim for the right to use (public) space as location for citizens to support social and cultural exchange. Josaphat and Brussels do not stand alone. The frictions around Josaphat can be positioned in **global neoliberalist tendencies**. The urban environment - which is increasingly becoming the everyday reality for the majority of people in the world today- is more and more becoming an economic asset (Ferguson, 2014). The effects of neoliberalism in uAD can be felt (Ferguson, 2014; Harvey, 2007; Sassen, 2015, 2016; Till, 2012, 2014). Globally, the urban environment as the place where all facets of life come together is facing rising land and housing prices. Sometimes so fierce that people are expelled from their homes (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2015; Sassen, 2014). Neoliberalism has set in motion a hitherto commercialization and commodification of people's livelihoods (Fenton, Lupton, Arrundale, & Tunstall, 2013; Harvey, 2005, 2007; KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture & Commons Josaphat, 2017).



To reveal some of the underlying discourse and attitude of this commodification process, I welcome the character of “**Economic Man**”. His figure has been introduced to me by Katrine Marçal (2016) in her book “*Who cooked Adam Smith’s dinner*” and Kate Raworth’s (2017) in her “*Doughnut economics*” in which they critically re-evaluate the global neoliberalist model. I will follow these authors in bringing up this actor as the founding and increasingly normative model for our economic and societal organization. As a caricature of what type of human being is placed central to the neoliberal discourse, his generalized characteristics will support me in discussing which attitude is informing the commodification of the urban environment.

Informed by the readings of Raworth (2017) and Marçal (2016), I identify “homo economicus” through **five adjectives representative for his behavior**. The first is a positivist logic. Economic Man is all-knowing and makes informed and objective decisions that are based on rationality and the scientific. He has a positivist view that favors observable methods with an objective stance and measurable evidence. Secondly, his actions tend to be entirely predictable. Through his positivist logic, homo economicus holds the promise to be in control. His behavior can be steered through financial incentives. “*Things put into numbers immediately become certainties*” (Marçal, 2016, p. 47). As a third characteristic, Economic Man thrives of independence. He stands free; he has no childhood, nor context. He is isolated and stands as an individual, alone. If he invests in himself, he can become more competitive and stands out by being spectacular. Fourth, Economic Man embodies dominance. Efficiency and competitiveness support him to conquer the world. Following the traditional depiction of men in Western society; nature is at his feet. The living environment is a passive resource at his disposition to extract at maximal efficiency.

Similarly the household –reproductive work- is done for him out of love or at a low price. As fifth and last adjective, homo economicus is driven by self-interest. The neoliberal model emphasizes the ego of human being. Economic Man’s activities are extractive as to gain optimal profit. As a normative model he tells us it is okay to be anti-social. Through their feminist perspective Marçal (2016) and Raworth (2017) address how Economic Man, as the model of how human beings are ought to behave, embodies characteristics that are in the Western culture traditionally attributed to the masculine. To add on to this, Marçal points out that his freedom and supposed independence is based on the support of having others –often women- that balance and embody the opposite: emotion, altruism, thoughtfulness, solidarity. Economic Man thrives of a –often invisible- feminine support. Also, it is telling that this masculine and feminine dichotomy embedded in Economic Man’s caricature comes from a Western tradition that perceives sexes and their characteristics as being in opposition. This contradiction is anchored in a culture that attributes a superiority to the traits that are associated with the masculine. However, as an important note, there are other traditions in which feminine and masculine are seen as flows such as yin and yang that are connected in a circular motion, where no hierarchy nor dichotomy is at stake (Marçal, 2016).

Economic Man is a far-driven generalization that does not take into account the complexity of human beings who sometimes show to act out of emotion, tend to be unpredictable, are not always free, are highly dependent, and are sometimes just merely kind. His masculine model seem to be the norm of how to act in society and with it the production of the city. Economic Man’s caricatural representation of neoliberalism will serve as my target on whom to blame the frictions that emerge with the commodifica-

tion of the urban livelihood.

Economic Man loves **urban development; it is a lucrative business**. After all, real estate is a solid investment, and he cannot hide his happiness to see the increasing money flows going around in cities. His insatiable hunger for growth pushes for processes of privatization. After all he and his efficient and profitable attitude act best in a free market. It thus seems but legitimate to eliminate public goods to leave it over to his capable hands, to be found in the private market. Till (Till, 2012, 2014) and Harvey (Harvey, 2005, 2008) address such privatization has undesirable effects leading to the eroding of public projects. But Economic Man's positivist logic tells us economic reality makes the selling of public land and urban goods simply more favorable.

The on-going privatization leaves urban assets increasingly over to the rule of the market, where Economic Man can do his best to render the development of urban environments –as an investment in his self-interest- as profitable as possible. UAD has become part of an extractive business model fired up by competition. Let the most calculated and dominant man win. Extractive mechanisms aim to maximize profit and encourage competition at the cost of the public and common good (P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017). After all Economic Man –and thus people- function best when they compete (Marçal, 2016). And also, people function best as they consume. So while profit-driven pragmatism happens at the costs of valuable resources, Economic Man is increasingly becoming obsessed to address citizens as consumers. A controlled expression can be found through economic exchange, no need to look for it in the cultural or the social (Lewis, Inthorn, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2005; Raworth, 2017; Shrubsole, 2012). Spain is an exemplary case where Economic Man's neglect of reflection on the real necessity and validity of what is built became visualized in the many contemporary ruins the economic crisis has left in the Spanish landscape (Trovato, 2016). As the 2008 crisis might have caused an awareness on some of the less desired effects of Economic Man's way to deal with urban development, he today offers us a new handheld with his promise of hard work, rationality, and predictability (Marçal, 2016).

Accordingly, Economic Man preaches an austerity dogma; cuts now, growth later. And as he is rising his voice, **the wealth of people becomes secondary**. Savings first and foremost affect social and cultural services –Economic Man anyhow says it is better to build another shopping mall-, but also public infrastructure like public spaces (Hart boven Hard, 2014; Martinez & Garcia, 2000). Economic Man's solitary, calculating, competing and insatiable nature conflicts with an ambition to have human rights for all (Harvey, 2007; Raworth, 2017). And as the commodified urban environment is in the hands of our self-interested friend, people are being expelled from their everyday livelihood (P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017; Sassen, 2014). As land prices are rising, the housing crisis pushes low-income groups outside the cities. A tendency that is increasing to the extent that even those with a middle-class income are feeling the pressure of neoliberalization (Harvey, 2007). In important Spanish cities such as Madrid, people are evicted from their houses as they can no longer afford the rent, while in the meanwhile a fair share of the housing stock stands vacant.

Besides Economic Man's financial interest in our cities causes what Sassen (2015) describes as “**de-urbanization**”. Homo economicus is eagerly looking for the next new thing, which preferably should be better, bigger and more. Large scale urban development is to him a successful upgrade for the city. And although it can be claimed that such large scale (re)generation contributes to a densification of the city, Sassen claims

it kills the urban tissue. Economic Man's investment-based "urban land grab" (Sassen, 2014, 2015, 2016) results in a sharp upscale of building and land ownership; entire building blocks are bought up by one actor that tears down the original urban fabric to replace it by an enclosed large scale entity. This urban takeover often results in generic and large scale urban boxes. Economic Man's hunger makes demolition of the original urban tissue and reconstruction more viable (Sassen, 2015). Too bad this process erodes the organically grown fabric and its connected social networks. Simplified urban (re)generation might be more cost-efficient to Economic Man, for people this urban takeover encloses modest properties and makes affordable housing more scarce. As self-interest is his driving motor, why should Economic Man even try to help to provide answers for the growingly "wicked issues" the urban realm has to deal with (Skaburskis, 2008; Wallin, 2013; Weber & Khademian, 2008)? While it is increasingly felt our societal model is trembling on its foundations, Economic Man offers us at least a sense of control (Marçal, 2016). Ironically his attitude completely bypasses uAD's potential to contribute to affordable housing, sustainable mobility, qualitative employment, environmental care, general wellbeing, social inclusion, etc. In contrary, Economic Man's extractive financial investments cause households to lose their home and sets in motion an alienation of the everyday (De Sloover, 2017; European Commons Assembly, 2017b; Sassen, 2015, 2016; Vaneigem & Nicholson-Smith, 1983).

**In Brussels** Economic Man's neoliberalist mechanisms that come with the growing commodification of the urban environment can be recognized. Josaphat's planned privatization illustrates Economic Man is present within the BCR's government. After all the MSI is a corporation for urban development and their plans to also sell the Delta site show Josaphat's situation isn't but a single standing case.

In addition, the procedure for a competitive dialogue echoes an obsession to follow the rule of the market in search for competition and efficiency. But more worrisome, in Brussels, it seems considerable to sacrifice part of a park to build high road access to a new shopping mall project. While ignoring the vacancy of already existing shopping centers, the private NEO project illustrates a lack of reflection on what is, beyond a consumption-oriented perspective, necessary for the city.

The Josaphat plans cannot be accused to not contribute for the public interest as they aim to realize more affordable housing and some other vital issues for the whole Region, but it can be questioned at what rate and term the planned development might actually provide a sustainable solution. Most of the scheduled social housing for Josaphat risks to be leftover to market prices once they are sold (Perspective, 2018a). The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (GPDO), which is judged to be more of a real estate catalog, illustrates Economic Man's interest in urban investment overrules the ambition to construct a vision that would allow tackling the challenges at stake in the BCR.

Where for Josaphat –despite the in vast phases divided development- the outcome still could be different, already renowned examples of de-urbanization can be found in Brussels. The Up-site tower and the first projects for the already privatized territory of Thurn and Taxis turn their back to the surrounding environment, which results in rather flat public spaces (Hendrikx, 2017).

While the Region is still recovering from its fierce Brusselization, her government risks to reproduce or allow the reproduction of the same mistakes today. It is quite ironic to see the increased interest of investors, architects, and –with some delay- also planning administrations for the Brussels North quarter. With her vacant office towers –the WTC

towers as exemplary case- and empty public spaces this district symbolizes the devastating effects the commodification processes had throughout the Brusselization process. While Economic Man here admits his failure –seems he is not perfect after all- and he explores how to reanimate this iconic fiasco in urbanism, he continues business as usual elsewhere. It seems like there is no alternative possible. We keep on blindly following Economic Man (Marçal, 2016). After all, he is already omnipresent; land and housing are financial assets. There is no other option than to be like Economic Man –and to leave caring for predictability, efficiency, and self-interest. And so public institutions try to play according to the rules of the game. Although with the noble –be it questioned- intention to generate more qualitative and affordable housing and urban environment; urban land is bought, sold and developed within the market mechanisms.

Economic return remains a must. Following the advice of Economic Man, it is even preferred to incentive large scale development of building blocks and industrial sites (de Klerk, Feldbrugge, & Zonneveld, 2017, p. 41). Also, public actors have an account to make, and more significant projects equal more profit to be found. The rising land prices and rents are but inevitable collateral damage. At least the financial return can be invested in new urban development projects –to create more affordable housing wasn't it? Or maybe merely because Economic Man has thought us it is necessary to keep on growing and building –what was the Region's vision (GPDO) on sustainable urban development again? And eager for quick and tangible results, the homo economicus nudges us to simplify the issues at stake or -for the sake of efficiency- to neglect the human side –the plans (RPA) have to be made first, civic participation will have to wait. And while Economic Man with his promise of rational objectivity, control and efficiency reassuringly holds our hand, the future city is dealt with as a commodity. Economic Man makes us run in the market wheel. Commodifying. Running faster and faster. Away from the city we actually want to live in.

As the house-garden-and-kitchen projects at Josaphat illustrate; we more than ever look for a living environment that can provide us a comforting way out (Bollier & Helfrich, 2015b; Ferguson, 2014; Shareable, 2017). It appears people can / want to be different than Economic Man. But –feminine- characteristics such as the emotional, caring, vulnerable, dependent and subjective are fit in the subordinate category. They are no competition to Economic Man; it is the highest bidder that wins the game. Those that act differently are not supposed to claim equality (Marçal, 2016).

When it comes to Economic Man **something seems to be shifting today**, it appears even he has his flaws. His normative image is cracking. Raworth (2017) proposes other economic models –doughnut economy- in which the portrait of Economic Man makes space for a view on humanity as a community, as sow-ers and reapers, and as acrobats. Economic Man has to acknowledge other figures are challenging him. These persona's consist of groups and of different actors that recognize our social dependence on each other (community), our ground in nature and the web of life (sowers and reapers), and in trust, reciprocity, and cooperation with each other (acrobats).

## b. Our city is built by Modern Architect

Economic Man's caricature has been a reliable assistant to embody the neoliberal stance that is anchored in contemporary society. He and his positivist logic, predictability,

independence, dominance and self-interest, resonate in how neoliberal society deals with urban development. Josaphat and Brussels do not seem to be an exception; construction is a big business and buying land, developing vast areas for housing to sell –if we are lucky with some space for nature- is the way we believe urban regeneration is most efficient (Ferguson, 2014). Economic Man seems omnipresent in the field of urban architectural design. His robust caricature has helped me to address certain generalized attitudes and matters of concern that I see also play at Josaphat's ground. Inspired by his efficiency to bring up some of the underlying mechanisms of the commodification process, I would like to clay an architectural alter ego. Let me introduce the prestigious persona of “**Modern Architect**”. As an associate of Economic Man, he will help me to embody the design attitude that can be affiliated to the neoliberal stance on city making. Arguing that Economic Man and his architectural alter ego are two of the same kind, I want to draw a parallel between the neoliberal stance and the attitudes practiced in the field of uAD. After all, neoliberalism is reproduced through urban development (Petrescu & Trogal (Eds.), 2017; Sassen, 2015). Modern Architects caricaturizes a design attitude that is grounded in the modernist history of urbanism and architecture. A generalized stance to uAD from which I will claim Modern Architect still acts it out in the planning and development of Josaphat today. In his resemblance with Economic Man, I will use the persona of Modern Architect to reveal some of the matters of concern that I see to be at stake in contemporary uAD.

But first, let's get to know Modern Architect a bit better. Together with Economic Man, he grew up throughout the industrialization period. He has his roots in an era of the booming economy, the massive growth of cities and unseen technical advancements. It was an exciting time, and despite the growing pains the overall quality of life was rapidly improving (Saad-Sulonen, 2013; Wikipedia, 2018). Modern Architect -as young and ambitious man- saw the opportunities to innovate and set out the marks for a modern way of dealing with life, architecture and the city. He reinvented the house as a “*machine à habiter*” (Le Corbusier, 1925) and the city as “*ville contemporaine*”. Inspired by engineering and its technological innovations, Modern Architect dreamt of appropriating a similar exactness, economic reasoning, and calculated efficiency. So eager as he is to limit randomness, Modern Architect invited his friends to set up their own set of rules. The epic CIAM conference of 1929 consolidated his intellect (Mumford, 2002); Modern Architecture and design were to be “scientized” (Cross, 2001) imposing an economic awareness, objectivity, and rationality. With unflagging zeal, Modern Architect advocates functionalist urban planning, fast and cheap development, stereotype production, fixed patterns, speculative exploitation, and newness.

Modern Architect and Economic Man get along quite well, they have significant resemblances and show to share the same set of adjectives. As first, Modern Architect embraces positivist logic. His authoritarian expertise is grounded in his technical intellect and mathematical accuracy. Inspired by the novelties of machines; he glorifies pragmatic, efficient and economical solutions. Thriving of his scientific and objective knowledge, he designs the ideal minimal –because more economical- house for modern family and sets out the world-conquering ideals for architecture and urbanism. As second facet he is proud fan of predictability. His positivist way of working guarantees the best outcomes. Blueprint planning, functionalist zoning are in favor of tangible and finished results. Competition is his thing, and he aims to be efficient and in control. Accordingly Modern Architect likes to work together with Economic Man; private actors

support him in chasing financial solidity and efficiency (Loeckx, 2015). Thirdly, Modern Architect stands free and is independent (see 00.05.fig. 8). He is a creative individual that holds on his own and sees architectural design as elevated above its context (Rand, 1993). His masterful models are made with a top-down eye, and the original urban fabric is but a hindering obstacle to make space for his new and modern creations (Peeters & Schuiten, 2012). His designs are freestanding objects for which nature at highest serves as a nice décor (One Architecture Week, 2016b). A fourth cluster adjective, Modern Architect fits well in a dominant positioning. He has ambitious ideas about the future and designs the dreamt of the urban environment for the new man. In his plans, nature is a controllable green carpet for human recreation. He likes Economic Man's taste for growth. Everything should be different and more prominent. Acknowledged studies on what entails a suitable habitat for homo sapiens are irrelevant in the wake of radical innovation. He reinvents what is supposed to entail a qualitative environment tailor-made to modern life. The banality of local neighborhoods and their pure everyday liveliness are but undesired traces of a dull past. It is in his power to re-think the built (Doucet, 2015c; Gehl, 2015; Park, 2015; Peeters & Schuiten, 2012). As fifth and final, there is the self-interest of Modern Architect. His iconic designs orient at sterile and neat –photographic– results. He tends to simplify complexity in favor of his invention and sake of economic efficiency. Resources to him are infinite and he is like Economic Man is driven to get the most spectacular results at the best price. For the greater creative goal, it is accepted to work through extractive mechanisms and if necessary even at the cost of the comfort of real life (Heathcote, 2013). In his brilliant creations maintenance is no concern (Gössel & Leuthäuser, 2005). His masterful ideas are to be respected at any prize (Rand, 1993).

Modern Architect's masculine attitude has come with a cost. After all, it is he and his economic associate that had driven the Brusselization. His noble ambitions didn't live out the promise of better living environments, in contrary even. He is accused to neglect the complexities of the urban environment and to be ignorant of the local life of neighborhoods (Jacobs, 1961). Christopher Alexander (1979) judged Modern Architect's conviction that the "lebendige" (liveliness) (Leitner, 2015) can be made, rather than generated. Lina Bo Bardi mocked his colonializing attitude in detachment of people and local cultures (Zeuler, 2013). Team X ought him incapable to take up his responsibilities towards the users he designs and builds for (Smithson, 1974). The Hansens ditched him for his (Western) European dominance that imposed what they labeled "closed form" design (Ockman, 2014). Lucien Kroll blamed Modern Architect for eroding democracy through his authoritarian attitude and behind-closed-doors made decisions (Bouchain, 2013; S. Kroll & Kroll, 2015). Culot and Krier manifested that with their empty and symbolic form-oriented creations, his modern buildings lead to the physical and social destruction of the urban tissue (Culot & Krier, 2017). Despite his grandeur, Modern Architect has made some painstaking mistakes throughout his career.

But modernist times are behind us now. And Modern Architect's being might be but an awkward nightmare from the past. But Modern Architect has earned his stripes, and his overwhelming stardom might have weakened, it hasn't fainted. It seems that in contemporary neoliberal times, Modern Architect has grown older. At a certain point, he mutated to become a starchitect. And although he even in this disguise has to face a reputation of "the asshole who doesn't care" (Heathcote, 2018), his contributions and achievements are still vigorously celebrated in the general uAD discourse. Also in archi-



tectural education, Modern Architect seems still alive and kicking (Pak, 2017). A top-down view on the architectural model remains the way to go, and juries are still hungry for outstanding projects (Gehl, 2015). Architectural education is entrenched in a culture of discussions –dominating the conversation- that favors a more distancing, competitive, severe and even aggressive stance to debate (Janssens, 2017). Modern Architect has learned from his mistakes, and he might be no longer as straight forward, his attitude is still today embedded in many practicing architects and urban planners and teachers in uAD. His discourse even has managed to percolate beyond the architectural profession, and so Modern Architect is still very active today. He in the meanwhile also integrated into planning administrations, urban decision-making and he seems present in all sorts of visionary tools for making the city.

It seems that Modern Architect still holds the uAD scene in a stranglehold –albeit no longer as tight as before. Like Economic Man, he has to face criticism and Josaphat ground hints for another type of practice to be at stake. As Saskia Sassen (2017) claims the money-making machine that took over the urban, need to be challenged, and for this, a new type of urbanism is at stake. Could it be that also Modern Architect –like his economic friend- will have to make space for a shifting model?

Informed by the design-based participatory action research evolving at Josaphat’s living lab at large, I have in this chapter discussed how its ground entails a happening place (00.05.01). This ground (a) is symbolic for Brussels as Josaphat forms the location of both citizen’s interest to explore another way of city making as well as the position of the Brussel Capital Region’s (BCR) ambition to innovate its urban planning procedures. Josaphat also illustrates (b) some things are in friction with how her planning process is taking its course. Citizens feel the need to defend the livability of their city, a struggle that appears to(c) not be unfamiliar to Brussels. I have claimed Josaphat’s situation is also symptomatic for how uAD takes place in Brussels today.



00.05.fig. 8 – Film screens from The Fountainhead. Ayn Rand (1943). Warner Bros.



00.05.fig. 9 – Flyer by Commons Josaphat.



00.05.fig. 10 – Visualization of Josaphat’s planned southwest corner, December 2015. Image by MS-a.



00.05.fig. 11 – Find the seven differences, above the Richtschema for Josaphat, below the plans for Saint Sauveur in Lille (FR).

### 00.05.03 Discussion: something is in the air

In the previous section, I have focused on what I see is going wrong (00.05.02). I have welcomed the character of (a) “Economic Man” (Marçal, 2016; Raworth, 2017) as foundational and normative model for our neoliberalist society. In a follow-up I have created an architectural alter ego; (b) “Modern Architect” performs Economic Man’s profit-driven attitude in a modernist mindset.

Here I will discuss how I see something is in the air (00.05.03). Josaphat’s situation and the generalized agency of Modern Architect inform (a) matters of concern to take into account for contemporary uAD. Accordingly, I will claim that at Josaphat, with her house-garden-and-kitchen and commoning uAD interventions, a seed is planted for an approach to uAD. Might it be that Josaphat can inform another model to challenge Modern Architect’s dominance in the field, and hence also the matters of concern he embodies? In this last section, I will formulate the research questions at stake in this doctoral research and design practice.

#### a. Matters of concern

As a happening place (00.05.01) Josaphat offers a dynamic scene that triggers civic socio-spatial innovation as well as she is a pilot case for novel planning procedures in the BCR. Through her development the MSI ambitions to provide a solution to some of Brussels’ wicked issues like the need to of the city to become more sustainable and to face the housing shortage. In parallel citizens find at her, a site of action to explore generative ways to produce the city. These, amongst others, involve caretaking, contact with the natural environment, self-built housing and envisioning a commons neighborhood. In this, she finds her symbolic ground.

Josaphat could mark a significant step forward in city making. Her situation also reveals some of the challenges that are emerging in visioning and making the future of our city; some things are in friction. As can be considered representative of how the BCR envisions the urban development of Brussels, she equally becomes the platform to address how these ambitions and planning processes are felt to be insufficient. The plans are criticized to not have an adequate vision on mobility, to bring about a loss of nature and public space and to be too dense. All of these issues are feared to threaten the quality of life.

Most strongly the planning process is judged to be not living up to the minimal standards for citizen participation. A lack of transparency and access to information is recurrently revoked. Let be that citizens feel there is space for an actual civic-public collaboration in making their city. Instead, Josaphat’s land will be sold off to the private and left over to profit-driven market mechanisms. And the newly reformed Co-BAT with her RPA is criticized for favoring efficiency in urban development more in favor of investors and at the cost of civic participation.

The expressed fear for a devaluation of the quality of the urban environment and the criticized lack of transparency and civic participation in the planning process, address something is wrong (00.05.02) with how urban development is taking its course at Josaphat –and Brussels. I claim the addressed frictions are related to the neoliberal stance

on city-making. As commodification of the everyday livelihood sets through a sense of “emergency” in uAD (see 00.05.fig. 9). To provide an analysis of the matters of concerns that underline this emergency, the caricatures of Economic Man and Modern Architect assist me to express the underlying attitudes.

These generalized caricatures are two of the same kind. Economic Man (Marçal, 2016; Raworth, 2017) and his here created architectural associate Modern Architect favor a technological and rational approach. In a modernist era colored by functionalism, a keen interest in the machine and an obsession with the new; the figure of Modern Architect could grow to become an ideal. Like Economic Man, this generalized figure that is foundational to a changing society serves as a model to follow. Both caricatures illustrate the dominating discourse within their profession in which they as leading agent help to control and form the desired image. Independent, free, obsessed with growth and the spectacular, competitive, rational, etc. every person/architect should be like them.

Five adjectives represent the attitudes embedded in the figures of Economic Man and his architectural alter ego Modern Architect. All of which show to be traditionally –in Western society- attributed to the male. Not coincidentally these characteristics are regarded to be more desirable and “strong”; in favor of the modern way of living. The female support both males can benefit from is perceived as subordinate to these ideals.

Economic Man and Modern Architect embody a respectively neoliberal and modernist view on society, humanity and in accordance uAD. They represent an attitude which is obsessed with a positivist logic; a preference for what is rational, quantifiable, objective and technical. This rational view looks for predictability; embracing control, efficiency, clear plans and competition as the means to guarantee tangible results. The human and his designs should be independent; efficiency and creativity is to be obtained through a free, distanced and alone standing position. Modern Architect embodies a dominating stance; where the interest for the social and natural environment is to be neglected, the spectacular to be aimed. To conclude, the caricatures share a strong self-interest; where the human and the user stand secondary and caring is subordinate to individual ambitions. Modern Architect –like his friend Economic Man- can be criticized to neglect the emotional, uncertain, dependent, recessive and caring nature of human beings, and in extension uAD. Both generalizations represent an attitude that has weakened over time as they are increasingly facing counter agents. They still seem to have much of the urban production in their stranglehold.

As caricatures, they are simplified models standing for the neoliberal and modernist-based attitude toward society and uAD. Both these movements seem the driving motor behind the for Josaphat evoked challenges at stake in city making. Neoliberalism imposes the rule of the market and has pushed public actors into an austerity dogma, while increasingly wicked issues have to be dealt with. Sacrifices are to be made now, to favor growth and wellbeing later. There seems to be no other alternative than to play according to the game. Despite the devastating effects of an increasing urban land grab and de-urbanization, privatization is pushed through. And people’s everyday livelihoods are left over to extractive business models. As the city is further commodified, wealth and the liveliness of our urban environment become secondary.

Market-driven uAD is not new to Brussels, and the modernist discourse has left her devastating marks in the city’s urban fabric. The city’s amalgam of agencies and fragmented governance have allowed an extractive attitude toward urban development to

flourish. Under the guise of modernist innovation, Brusselization has resulted in urban trauma's that can still be felt today. Although Brussels' reputation of "being sold off" (see 00.05.fig. 4) has weakened, the commodification of people's livelihood is still hot and happening. Brussels' strong legacy of urban activism informs a suspicious awareness that the Region's planning instruments hint to be more in favor of profit-driven development rather than citizen participation, let be co-creation to empower the livability of the city (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017; Collectif des signataires, 2018). The BCR lacks a clear and humanist vision on her uAD (ARAU, IEB, BRAL, et al., 2017; Comité de site Josaphat, 2017a).

The frictions around Josaphat's planned future do not stand alone, just in Brussels, many other urban projects are being –even more strongly– contested. It is in the broader neoliberal and modernist-based regards to urban production in Brussels that Josaphat's ground is embedded. Urban activists, nearby residents and opposition parties address something is wrong. The planning process seems to still majorly fit the discourses represented by Economic Man and Modern Architect. At its base lies an obsession with positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance, and self-interest. In her particular and complex Brussels context, I claim Josaphat's ground is symbolic and symptomatic and reveals some of the matters of concern at stake in contemporary uAD.

As the first adjective, the positivist logic is reflected in certain matters of concern addressed around Josaphat. The official planning procedures –CoBAT, RPA, environmental impact study, GPDO and the like– are legislative instruments that favor a technical, objective and rational approach. As standardized tools, they are aimed to support, control and steer uAD. Although the RPA masterplan makes a shift to be more strategy-oriented, the blueprint plan is still perceived as most viable form of expression for the envisioned future of Josaphat. The planning process is based on quantifiable criteria, to the public communicated through key numbers; 33,5ha in total, 14ha for the new district, 1.600 housing units, 131 inhabitants per hectare, etc. (Perspective & SAU/MSI, 2018) The positivist approach does not leave much space for the cultural layer. The emotional impact on people's everyday experience has but a weak –public inquiry– form of representation in these official procedures.

In addition, the positivist logic is also present in the planner's position as a technical authority. The (modern) architect knows best how the future of the city should be organized and given form. His intellectual dominance leaves only a marginal role to people who –supposedly– cannot think beyond their personal interest. The amount of information in the plans and their complex language and visualizations are made to be read and discussed by people with advanced technical expertise. Citizens who want to take part –or at least follow– the planning scheme, need to plow through the for them often inaccessible plans and studies. That is if they manage to get to see them first.

Another aspect, related to the obsession for positivist logic is functionalist approach. Especially in Brussels with its complex splintering of government bodies and administrations, urban development is parceled accordingly. This functionalism is not different for Josaphat, where the program for a school and sports hall –out of hands of the Region as this is a municipal responsibility– are isolated from the first development phase that will be in the hands of a private developer. Besides, most of the public and green spaces in Josaphat's RPA have their own set of assigned authorities. This in-modernism-anchored idea of functionalist division and zoning creates barriers between housing and education, but also green space and water management.



Another set of matters of concern that come with Modern Architect is his capacity to offer an idea of predictability. To guarantee controllable outcomes, he is eager to make the planning process as efficient and smooth as possible. The limited space given to participatory processes can be admitted to this obsession for staying in control. The reformed CoBAT remains close to the traditional participation by consultation approach. Through the public inquiry, people can express their remarks and concerns, to be analyzed by a committee of experts. This very staged type of participation offers a controllable framework to give voice to citizens, at least enough to legitimize the planned project. Concertation, let be co-creation and shared governance risk to slow down the already cumbersome process.

Ironically the MSI can be proud to have already staged one big communication moment (December 2015) even before the RPA was launched. No planning procedure demands, let be obliges this type of engagement. As such, they were quite “early” to set in motion “participation” for plans that already had been approved by the regional government in 2014. In the meanwhile, any form of collaboration with local actors is judged too early as the RPA first needs to pass and fix the framework (Perspective, 2018a). The efficiency and time gained by developing the plans behind closed doors promise to avenge as numerous citizens have built up the necessary frustrations. They are hungry to grab the few opportunities for participation at offer, and risk to delay or block the on-going planning process.

Another matter of concern linked to Modern Architect’s preference for predictability is illustrated through the generally accepted confidence in private developments to bring more efficient and secure results. The new competitive dialogue procedure promises to obtain a better offer coming from the private market. Josaphat’s to be developed district is divided into three plots of a significant size to encourage large scale development in the ambition to generate more quality. An aspect which Sassen (Sassen, 2015, 2016) has claimed to contribute more to the de-urbanization of the city. The vast scale of such developments offers no place for civic-driven urban development as is proposed by Commons Josaphat through their proposal for a model building block. At least for the first development phase with her on-going competitive dialogue, Josaphat’s future remains out of the league of citizens and local associations. UAD is a big boys’ –capital- game.

The third attribute of Modern Architect, independence reveals some more matters of concern at stake in contemporary uAD. What is being designed and planned at the drawing table remains distant from the local identity. The RPA of Josaphat –as far as it has been made accessible- results in a series of images –plans and renderings- that show generic with cubes (see 00.05.fig. 10). A plan that can easily be copy-pasted to other development plans for urban wastelands (see 00.05.fig. 11). And despite the beautiful renderings of people wandering in green and carless streets, they provoke a sense of alienation to residents and Brussels citizens. No relation with Josaphat’s direct surrounding and everyday atmosphere can be retraced. In essence, these images are merely schematic, yet their finished look and sense of reality come across as pharaonic.

The fourth adjective revealing matters of concern is dominance. Modern Architect takes up a hierarchical position. Not only through his technical authority (positivist logic), but also due to undemocratic decision-making. The plans for Josaphat are perceived as threatening, not only due to their scale and environmental impact but more strongly through the way they are imposed. The presentation of camera-ready plans during the first public communication event in December 2015 (see 00.05.fig. 10), left locals

with the feeling there is no place for them and their concerns to be taken into account. The petition mainly attacks the way the planning process has happened so far; in total disconnection from those people that will feel its direct impact (Comité Terdelt asbl, 2017). The in June 2018 information session organized by Perspective has continued the one-directional communication. There was only limited time given to citizens to express their concerns, let be there would be opportunities to be involved in the visioning and uAD process set up by the MSI. The Comité, as well as the occupants of the site and the citizen collective of Commons Josaphat, have been each giving –in different ways- expression to their view, concerns, and aspirations on and for Josaphat. It is clear the official planning procedure rules over them.

Another illustration of a dominating –even colonizing- stance can be found in the question how legitimate it can be for a public institution to even build on this open land. It occurs troublesome to sacrifice such a significant amount of nature that hosts such rich biodiversity (Sente, 2018). In the search to tackle some of the wicked issues of the BCR, Josaphat offers a place of opportunity due to its availability as publicly owned and unbuilt land. Within the set of tools and means available, the construction of the Josaphat district is seen as the most efficient and rational answer to the pressing housing crisis. It can be questioned why maintaining interesting nature zones is not taking into account as key concern of the BCR. The label of “sustainable” neighborhood gets a nasty taste here.

The fifth and last characteristic of Modern Architect is self-interest. It reveals matters of concern evoked by the need to show off successful results quickly. The MSI cannot be accused to go for the starchitect’s obsession with the spectacular, yet Josaphat stands as a pilot project. The MSI seems eager to prove the quality and innovation of their work; especially the new competitive dialogue procedure. The pressure this brings does not leave space for exploring civic-public collaborations in the Josaphat’s first development phase. Let’s not forget, regional elections are only one year away.

The interest in Josaphat as a financial investment illustrates another matter of concern. Although to Brussels standards Josaphat’s plans contribute significantly to the realization of more social housing, the MSI urban development corporation remains in track with the neoliberal model. Under the dogma of return on investment, the “self-interest” here might be more related to Economic Man’s extractive Behavior. Despite Commons Josaphat’s proposal showcasing other investment mechanisms are possible, housing and urban land are maintained in the mechanisms of market speculation. The MSI is criticized for taking part in the commodifying regard to the urban environment (Van Garsse, 2015). Also, the current course of the planning procedures is telling of who is at the heart of the Josaphat development. While citizens still need to await the “actual” participation process in uAD –by CoBAT defined as public inquiry- to kick off (June 2018), the search for a private developer and relevant design team has been launched December 2017. Citizens can get access to bits of the planning information as these are being made available for the procedure of the –at developers oriented- competitive dialogue. In the meanwhile, Brussels urban activist scene has to watch how one of the rare public land reserves will be sold off again to the highest bidder.

An obsession with positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance and self-interest are still very actual today, albeit more nuanced than this caricature. The generalized masculine characteristics of Modern Architect and Economic Man aid me to embody these matters of concern that are at stake for Josaphat and more generally

uAD in Brussels. Whether if the plans for Josaphat's ground will change the city for the better or, the worse, they will for sure impact on people's livelihood and quality of life. The BCR is experimenting with new planning procedures to innovate the uAD processes. They seem to remain still close to the established tracks, anchored in the modernist discourse. And as such, the planning train is bypassing the opportunities and proposals handed out by civic actors as well as critical architectural agents that call for another type of practices of making the city.

#### b. A seed is planted at Josaphat

Josaphat as a symbolic and symptomatic ground manifests that Brussels' uAD scene is a field of tensions. With the help of the persona of Modern Architect, I addressed some of the matters of concern that are at stake. Modern Architect might not be as strong as he used to be throughout his Brusselization high days, his agency seems to be still strikingly present in how the Brussels Capital Region organizes its urban development. However, the house-garden-and-kitchen stories (00.04) that are situated on Josaphat's ground (00.03) hint that Modern Architect –like Economic Man– is losing terrain and needs to make space for “altering” (Petrescu, 2007) models. This claim is enforced by Brussels' rich activist legacy that has emerged in response to the fierce Brusselization era. In response to Modern Architect and Economic man their profit-driven urban development –or rather destruction–, organizations like ARAU, IEB and BRAL emerged. Arisen in the wake of the '68 movement, these organizations are now enforced by a new generation of urban activism. These critical agents and their creative practices skillfully take advantages of the gaps offered by Brussels' circus of agents (Doucet, 2015b) and the market's leftovers. Temporary –or self-proclaimed for transitional– uses reveal that a huge potential is situated in the in-between.

In her book *“Doughnut Economies”*, Kate Raworth (2017) proposes to replace Economic Man by more differential personas. She nominates communities, sowers and reapers, and acrobats as the key actors in her doughnut-shaped economic model. Inspired by Raworth, I claim Modern Architect should make space for an altering model.

In this context, Josaphat illustrates the revolt that is emerging against the traditional approach in uAD that is embodied by Modern Architect. At Josaphat's ground, Brussels citizens, associations and spatial practitioners are looking to deal with the on-going commodification of their livelihoods. Within the “free zone” of the temporary/transitional space, a place is found to advocate for and explore commons-oriented uAD practices. Commons Josaphat, the house-garden-and-kitchen initiatives and Josaph'Aire's communing, each in their way, build on to Brussels strong legacy of urban activism.

Their work aspires to respond to some of the matters of concern in urban development, which I have revealed through the caricatured agency of Modern Architect. This agency is defined by his masculine framework of positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance, and self-interest in uAD. The urban activism in uAD has not been unnoticed by public actors. The MSI sees opportunities in the work of civic agents, and the, according to Economic Man, wasted in-between. Josaphat, as a symbolic and symptomatic ground, does not only reveal crucial matters of concern that need to be tackled, its ground also illustrates altering practices to approach the making of the city are in the air.

With Josaphat as a symbolic case, citizens and associations claim their freedom to challenge planning mechanisms and governmental decisions that they feel are more in favor of urban investments than for the general wellbeing. They think out of the framework that is imposed by Economic Man and Modern Architect. They creatively muddle their way through and challenge these masculine doctrines. Co-creating their visions and pilot projects, agents like Commons Josaphat open the debate on how the development of the city could / should be like.

As Josaphat hosts socio-spatial innovation in its self-proclaimed transitional use, it is a happening place and a living lab at large. The various uAD practices that are emerging around Josaphat hint other ways of doing are possible. So -however small- an alternative might be viable after all! An altering practice of urban architectural design is in the air. An altered attitude might push Modern Architect and his dominating discourse to the side. Josaphat provides a fertile breeding ground for commons-oriented uAD practices to grow and mature. On Josaphat's ground seeds are planted in exploration to nurture another way to make the city in Brussels.

Accordingly, the central research question for the doctoral research and design practice started from an exploratory search. How can I -as an architect, researcher, and urban activist-, with my specific skills, contribute to the commons-oriented direction civic agents aim to give to the urban architectural design of our city in Brussels?

The design-based participatory action research provided the main method through which to approach this ambition. The lived experiences, and designerly ways of knowing that have been obtained around Josaphat's ground have -speculatively- informed an altering spatial practice.

Subsequently, this dissertation aims to define, describe and visualize how an everyday architecture practice of urban commoning could contribute to a more resilient and integrated development of urban places. The doctoral research and design practice explore and articulate how a critical spatial practitioner might push for better quality of life and democratization through uAD.

Reacting to the matters of concern embodied by Modern Architect -and his close friend Economic Man- the uAD practices around Josaphat's ground can provide insights in how urban activists deal with these issues through spatial interventions. Through this doctoral research and design practice, I aim to contribute to the conversations considering the relation between the urban commons and the field of uAD. More particularly the lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing have been translated into several key concepts that -flirting with theory- help to make the consistency of the uAD practice.

Three subquestions are defined:

- ° What are the frictions at play around Josaphat, as symbolic and symptomatic ground for Brussels uAD?

- ° How can the promising principles of the (urban) commons be implemented in the uAD practice? What kind of practice emerges out of it and how does it approach the making of the city?

- ° What are the opportunities evolving around Josaphat and how can the altering practice that emerges on its ground be positioned within a broader movement?

# 00.06

contextualization

A TURNING POINT ?

*Notre approche est surtout paysagère, donc globale, relationnelle et de longue durée. Nous disons « paysage » dans le sens de milieu complexe construit par des décisions entrecroisées, multiples, tissées, jamais par des règles rigides, droites et simplificatrices. Elle est de longue durée puisqu'elle considère le passé, l'existant, le non-dit, comme le trame sur laquelle se propose le nouveau projet qui n'est qu'un moment dans l'histoire et qui continue à évoluer sans nous.*

- Simone & Lucien Kroll (2015, p. 15)

In order to better start to grasp what is moving in Josaphat's air, this chapter aims to provide contextualization for an altering stance to uAD. After giving an introduction to Josaphat's ground and methodological framework for this doctoral research and design practice (00.03) I have discussed some of the commons architectural practices that reveal some aspects of the doctoral design practice (00.04). In the previous chapter then I have addressed matters of concern (00.05) I feel to play around Josaphat and contemporary uAD at large.

## 00.06.01 Nothing new

In the previous chapter, I have brought up Modern Architect as the embodiment of matters of concern that are at stake at Josaphat's tense field. Although my persona of Modern Architect has weakened since his modernist high days, he is still is invasive today. I have hinted that a series of critical agents made it their goal to prove him wrong and accordingly I would like to introduce a new protagonist to the stage of uAD; please welcome "Participation Architect". (Round of applause.)

In this section, I will present this new actor to the game. He –as a counter agent of Modern Architect- will assist me to address that what is happening at Josaphat is nothing strikingly new (00.06.01), but has roots in broader movements of citizen involvement in Brussels uAD. I will first discuss how Participation Architect (a) faces his modern antagonist in an oppositional confrontation. After which I will retrace his earning in Brussels since '68. In this, I notice Participation Architect (b) surfs on three waves of citizen involvement in Brussels urbanism.

### a. Participation Architect as counter agent

Looking to position an altering model to challenge Modern Architect and the matters of concern he embodies, I welcome the new persona of Participation Architect. I want to credit him as one of the forces that have helped to kick Modern Architect from his pedestal. He is our –we, the commoners- hero from the modernist times. But before I as Participation Architect to help me to understand better where we stand at Josaphat's ground, I believe it is necessary first to get to know him a bit better. I will first present Participation Architect through his counter agency toward Modern Architect and his relation to the field of urban participatory design (PD). Looking at how Participation Architect stands today, especially in the unfolding field of participatory design (PD), it seems he could use an update.

Participation Architect saw his rising in response to what he noticed was going wrong in the ideas and practice of Modern Architect. He is born in an era of urban struggles and grew up in a defensive anti-movement. It was tumultuous times, those days that people got to the street to save their neighborhoods from their planned demolition in the wake of modern urban renewal. As a fierce defender of a more humane city Participation Architect has challenged Modern Architect's doctrine and defended liveliness (C. Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977), recognition of complexity (Jacobs, 1961; S. Kroll & Kroll, 2015), a relational stance (Smithson, 1974), local identity (Zeuler, 2013),



incrementalism (Scott, 2014), democracy (Culot & Krier, 2017; S. Kroll & Kroll, 2015), subjectivity (Scott, 2014) and modesty (Culot & Krier, 2017).

As a counter agent, the caricature of Participation Architect is characterized in opposition to Modern Architect's masculine attributes. He questions the obsession for a positivist logic and acknowledges the emotional aspects involved in uAD. His voice echoes through the work of Jane Jacobs (1961) who claims the city is a complex, lively and diverse creature; the urban realm is messy. Participation Architect finds embodiment in Lucien and Simone Kroll and their team who called to counter rigid and too simplifying rules through civic participation, listening and understanding (Bouchain, 2013). He acts out in the discourse of Christopher Alexander (Christopher Alexander, 1979; C. Alexander et al., 1977) who claims qualitative space –the “lebendige” as it has been named by Leitner (Leitner, 2015)- cannot just be planned but needs to be generated.

Participation Architect is aware that city making is and should not be too predictable, as it deals with human beings and nature. Cumbersome procedures need to be overcome, a transitional approach allows for care and understanding (S. Kroll & Kroll, 2015). In the identity of Oskar and Zofia Hansen, Participation Architect has challenged the obsession with finished and closed results. Through the concept of “open form” he sought and experimented ways to escape strong disciplinary norms (Aleksandra Kedziorek, 2017).

Participation Architect mocks Modern Architect's claimed independence as he sees the architect as standing with the users and the environment of his creations. His approach is inhabitant-oriented (S. Kroll & Kroll, 2015) and his agency can be retraced in the work of architects like Lina Bo Bardi who dedicated her work to develop a local –indigenous- style to shake of the modern western vocabulary obsessed with form (Zezuler, 2013). Participation Architect seeks to be with his surroundings and connects to the local and popular culture. Amongst others embedded in the work of the Hansens, Participation Architect aims to counter the obsessions with hierarchy and the imposed vision of Modern Architect (Aleksandra Kedziorek & Ronduda, 2013). He is to be at the service of the user.

Participation Architect starts from an underdog position and questions the dominance of Modern Architect; he is aware he is vulnerable. He found a counter movement for the CIAM movement of Modern Architect through Team X. In their primer (Smithson, 1974) he could express his vision on the built as a living thing; nature and culture are at an equal base. A collaborative approach is needed, in which Participation Architect takes up his responsibility toward the collective environment he is part of.

He cares for his participants; people are his central responsibility; he shouldn't be driven by self-interest. Participation Architect shouts out through the -initially published in 1978- manifest of the Brussels architects Culot and Krier (2017). Lashing out at Modern Architect for his destruction of the built and social fabric of the city, Participation Architect claims the self-interest of the architect erodes democracy and forms a threat to urban life. People should be positioned centrally. As he tries to abandon the obsession with individual freedom Participation Architect himself cannot resist claiming his space in the spotlight. He shows to function better in a duo –a couple even- and recognizes –although still weakly- the power of his team. Participation Architect is partly made up by the modest work of the caring support embedded in agents such as Simone Kroll (BOZAR, 2016, June-September) and Zofia Hansen (Museum of Modern Art Warsaw, 2017, September - October).

There is a significant affiliation between Participation Architect and the field of participatory design, hence the motivation for his name. PD stretches beyond the field urban architectural design and has its roots in the working environment -Scandinavian tradition - and the arts scene-the Situationist movement. Both bases emerged around the '60s and '70s (Hamers et al., 2017), not coincidentally also the time Modern Architect and Economic Man were hot and happening -Brusselization. Participation Architect's agency -within uAD- resonates with the concerns of PD to improve quality of life (Saad-Sulonen et al., 2015). Participation Architect shares PD's aspiration to counter liberalist models -Economic Man- and to set in motion a democratization process through critical design alternatives and objects (E Björgvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2010). I will blend the ambition for a better quality of life and democratization as the "(be)longing" of Participation Architect.

It is clear that Participation Architect feels comfortable in the broader field of PD. The PD discourse offers him a framework of recognition; not at least in governmental guidelines. A direct relation between PD and uAD can be found in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) "Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters" - also "Aarhus Convention". The agreement consolidates citizens should be empowered to participate in the decision-making on matters that concern their (urban) environment (UNECE, 1998). In accordance, the UN Habitat (2014) emphasizes the democratization aspect of participation -in its identity as citizenship and civic engagement- as a key attribute for good urban governance.

As Josaphat's ground and her matters of concern illustrate, the way Participation Architect's discourse is currently recognized and implemented in planning procedures seem to be insufficient. As planning mechanisms struggle to achieve civic participation clumsily, the theory and practice of PD are continuously "unfolding" (Horelli et al., 2013; Saad-Sulonen et al., 2015). Shifts in the field of PD are being marked as PA muddles his way through formal procedures. Acknowledging that Participation Architect and PD share a foundation, this opens up the question what Participation Architect's state of being might entail today? It is about time Participation Architect moves beyond opposing Modern Architect and first and foremost re-evaluates the meaning of participatory uAD today.

One of the contemporary shifts in PD is marked by a general shift in the world of design. The design practice is diverging from its traditional focus on tangible design objects (Margolin, 1995), and thus orients more towards services, experience design and organizational structures (Hoeschele, 2016; Jones, 1991; Ezio Manzini, 2014; Manzini, 2015a; Norman, 2010; Van Reusel, 2016b). A similar shift also resonates in the field of PD, where notions as "design-after-design" (Erling Björgvinsson et al., 2012; Redström, 2008), "infrastructuring" (Karasti, 2014; Karasti & Baker, 2004; Le Dantec & Disalvulo, 2013) and "self-organization" (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Saad-Sulonen, 2013) are surfacing and hint for an altering attitude in design. In this shift, the PD scene takes up a progressive position and supports a broadening of the current interpretation of design. In his book "Design, when everybody designs" Ezio Manzini (2015a) addresses two factors that reinforce this shift; of which the first is the wicked problems that need to be dealt with. The second factor is linked to the increase in communication opportunities through new technological means.

This leads to a second shift that is encountered in PD, one that is driven by the innova-

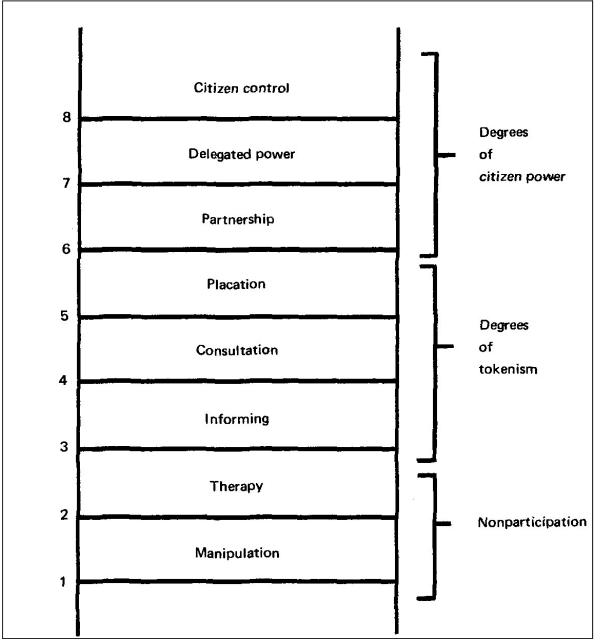
tions in ICT and more particularly the rise of digital social media (Napawan & Snyder, 2016). Talking about “participatory urbanism”, Nina Claire Napawan and Brett Snyder (2016) group Do-It-Yourself (DIY) urbanism (LaFrombois, 2017), tactical urbanism and the like. In their article “#FOGWASTE: Participatory urban-ism towards place-understanding” a strong tie is recognized between the urban interventions created through participatory and community-based design and the ICT. Did Participation Architect get accustomed to the new tools at his reach? Maybe he is in need of an update; Participation Architect 2.0?

Third, there seems to be a growing presence of self-organization (Horelli, Saad-Sulonen, Wallin, & Botero, 2015) and interest in shared governance for uAD. Relating to the grounding work of Sherry Arnstein (1969) and her “Ladder of citizen participation” it seems it is time to take some steps up on her gradations of citizen involvement in urban renewal (see 00.06.fig. 1). It might be time for Participation Architect to leave his comfortable position acquired in formal planning procedures where he most commonly resides at “degrees of tokenism”. Could he reach out to “degrees of citizen power”? He needs to question if he –in search for democratization- can support partnership (6), and more far-reaching delegated power (7) and citizen control (8) as “participation” can be blunt manipulation (1) are mere information (3).

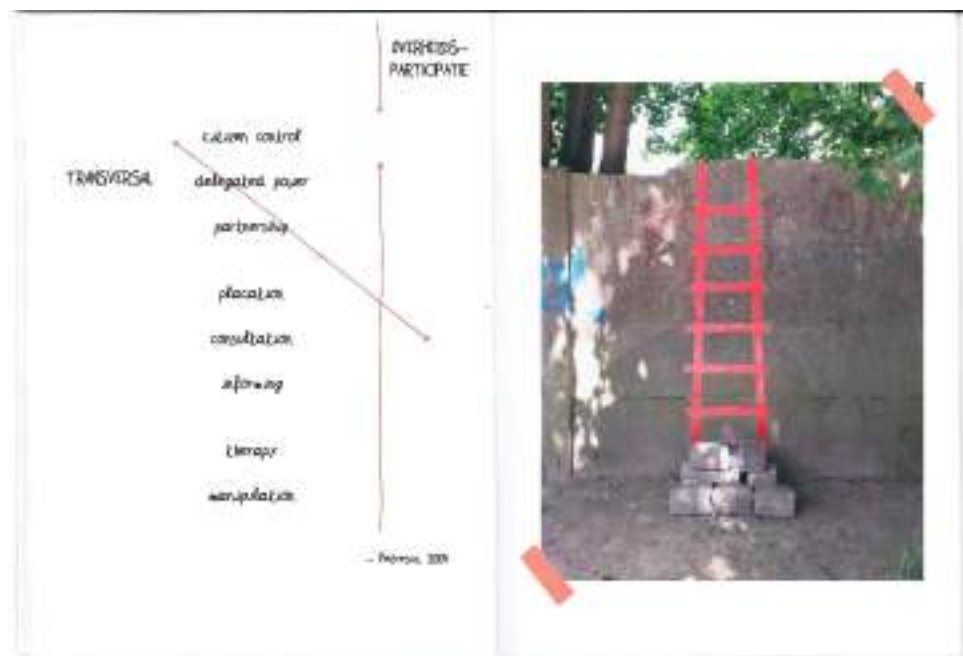
Concerning this the fourth shift in PD can be retraced in the workshop call for “Collaboratively Articulating ‘Urban’ Participatory Design?!” organized by Mette Agger Eriksen et al. (2016) for the 2016 Participatory Design Conference held in Aarhus (DK). The workshop call -and the conversations within the actual workshop- revealed urban PD is moving toward the (urban) commons and commoning (Eriksen et al., 2016). A concept of which Hillgren et al. (2016) in the context of urban PD, claim that it contests the notion of participation in search to constitute local democratization processes. Could it be that Participation Architect needs to move beyond participation as such? Maybe it is time for him to redefine himself and dive into the commons movement. Commons architect?

Doina Petrescu (2005) –not coincidentally a renowned commoner- marks the fifth shift through her critical regard toward the contemporary implementation of PD –which she names “organized participation” in urban planning. This is a control oriented performance of citizen involvement in urban action -or also; the lower steps of Arnstein’s ladder (see 00.06.fig. 2). Petrescu claims that moving beyond such form of participation requires a “transversal” approach, which is not hierarchical or symptomatic, but instead welcomes the unexpected and continually evolving process (see 00.05.fig03). Moving away from being in control, this transversal approach also questions the participation dichotomy. Moreover, Isabelle Doucet (2015b) advocates to move beyond the opposition between bottom-up and top-down. It might be time for Participation Architect to look for a different location of his agency. Could he also be found outside the oppositional civic agency versus planning administrations and political decision-makers? Maybe he “builds” the city through lobbying or constructive urban activism?

Following, PD has not only broadened its original scope within the working environment to the urban field. The sixth unfolding of PD shows it is increasingly distributed in many areas. The Proceedings of the 2016 Participatory Design Conference (2016) show PD is acted out in health care, computing, education, and water management... to name a few. This broad range of fields in which PD is situated illustrates its inter- and transdisciplinary nature. Both in participatory processes and in the urban environment diverse



00.06.fig. 1 – Eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969).



00.06.fig. 2 – A re-imaging of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation overlapped by Petrescu's transversal participation, October 2015.

areas of research show to merge and entangle. As the very notion of design is shifting and uAD is blending in with other disciplines, Participation Architect might need to ask himself some existential questions. Does he –in search of his (be)longing- still need to be an architect per se?

Considering shifts the field of (participatory) design is undergoing, it seems it is time to re-evaluate and re-imagine Participation Architect as the hero to challenge Modern Architect and Economic Man today. He might need to let go of his orientation directed at tangible design results. The rise of new technological and digital media urge him to explore a new set of tools. The commons movement challenges him to go further up Arnstein's (1969) ladder and to involve in the self-organization and self-governance of civic actors, while a discourse on the transversal pushes him to move away from oppositional dichotomies. To add on, a growing transdisciplinary approach questions his architectural framework.

Looking back with Dag Boutsen (Van Reusel & Boutsen, forthcoming) at participatory practices in the field of architecture, a red wire throughout five decades of PD in architecture is found. In our view, participation is to be approached as an aspect that "contributed / most likely will contribute" to improving the quality of life and democratization. Participation as a tool for (be)longing. In search of an alter-ing uAD, and an altering attitude to Modern Architect's doctrine and Economic Man's hunger for com-modification, urban PD –as a tool- most likely will / could / should have a significant contribution.

It seems Participation Architect is ready to leave the scene. Though it is not my intention to push him and his rich legacy aside, it might be more interesting to look for his contemporary evolution, or maybe rather mutation. But before I start to speculate on his current being an becoming –clouded in Josaphat's air- I first will dig a bit deeper in the position and earnings of Participation Architect in Brussels from '68 onwards.

## b. Surfing on the waves of citizen involvement in Brussels

The Brussels Capital Region and Participation Architect have an entangled history. My protagonist has fiercely reacted against Modern Architect's stronghold on Brussels uAD. Brussels urban planning is embedded in a modernist doctrine; with the '62 Belgian organic Law on Spatial and Town Planning (Stedenbouwwet), Modern Architect got feet on the ground and established a first holistic organization for the whole of Belgium (Cromheecke et al., 2011; Evert Lagrou, 2002).

Brussels and its particular position within the Belgian politics complicated the situation. It seems Brussels has an inherent resistance for a logically structured organization. Brussels' nonchalant laissez-faire is a pain for Modern Architect but has also allowed him and Economic Man to set in motion its very own destruction. Still, Participation Architect cannot but feel a puzzled appreciation for Brussels' messy urbanism.

There is an intriguing richness in retracing Brussels' urban planning back to the 19th century, as Isabelle Doucet (2010) has proven through her dissertation "*From Penser la Ville to Faire la ville*". However, I will follow her from 1968 on, where Doucet marks a significant moment in Brussels urban history. '68 represents a populist switch of fundamental resistance and in follow-up formed a crucial breaking point to the traditional way of making the city in Brussels (Doucet, 2010; Evert Lagrou, 2000). Not coinciden-



tally this is the time of Brussels' "lutttes urbaines" (urban struggles) (Doucet, 2015c). As people gathered on the street to protest against Modern Architect's urban renewal plans –Brusselization–, these struggles laid the foundation for a civic resistance to large scale urban projects. Participation Architect has actively lived this momentum; it is there he formed the roots of his agency, the time when PD found its roots. For Participation Architect, the history of uAD in Brussels starts then.

Not only for Participation Architect, this era is perceived as the beginning of a broader movement. Alfredo Mela (2016, 2018) situates the protest movement during the late '60s and '70s as standing in strong relation to the first -out of three- waves of citizen involvement he recognizes in the field of uAD. Professor Mela, who is based at the Politecnico di Torino, sees three major waves of citizen involvement to occur in urban planning in Turin and Italy and, in extension, also in Western Europe in general. The three waves and their '70's, '90's and '10's timing as proposed by Mela resonate with the '68, '98 and '18 rhythm Dag Boutsen and I defined in our discussion considering a historical perspective on participatory practices in the field of architecture (Van Reusel & Boutsen, forthcoming). Furthermore, the conversations I had with Alfredo Mela in September 2016 and May 2018 revealed a strong parallel between how Mela sees these three "vagues" manifest in Turin and my study of the evolution of PD in Brussels' uAD.

In the context of Brussels, the first significant moment of citizens raising their voice and claiming their rights stands in definite relation to the Brusselization process that at that time impacted without mercy (Dessouroux & Puissant, 2008). Under this treat, activist citizens supported by the at that time founded ARAU, IEB and BRAL and Participation Architect united in an underdog position. Together they struggled to tackle the strong –devils- pact between Economic Man and Modern Architect. The modernist in-spired (re)development of Brussels was called to be halted to save the everyday value of urban livelihoods (Doucet, 2010). This first wave of citizen involvement in uAD is contextualized in a broader atmosphere of revolt, where for Brussels she acted out in oppositional "lutttes urbaines" (Doucet, 2010). With venomous anger, Participation Architect shouts for a more humane and democratic–(be)longing- city (Culot & Krier, 2017).

This first wave related to the populist '68 counter-movement is tied up with what is marked to be a first turning point in Brussels planning (Aron, 1978; Levy, 2013). In the wake of the activist resistance, the Brussels planning instruments have opened up to recognize citizenry's competencies within uAD (Levy, 2013); techniques for citizen involvement became embedded in urban planning procedures. The "public inquiry" makes citizen consultation obliged and offers the opportunity for citizens to comment and contest plans in an organized setting. This turning point offered a first improvement of the enclosed planning processes of Modern Architect; a shift was made from a "Brussels' urbanism of the fait accompli" (Doucet, 2015a, p. 43) to one where citizen participation -through organized consultation- became formally recognized as a cornerstone for democratic city making. In addition, the emergence of citizen movements like BRAL, IEB and ARAU and their urban-political activism in Brussels are anchored in the first wave of citizen involvement and support the arguments for a first turning point (Doucet, 2015a; Levy, 2013).

Joining people in the streets and manifesting against the doctrine of Modern Architect, Participation Architect in accordance expressed his criticism through iconic architectural realizations. "La MéMé" (Maison Médicale in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe, BE) by the

architecture office A.U.A.I. (Atelier d'Urbanisme, d'Architecture et d'Informatique) is a notable example of an architectural creation in defense of a more humane and democratic approach to making the city.

In this iconic architectural realization, Participation Architect is embodied by Simone and Lucien Kroll who -with their design team- guided the creation and realization of this built piece of participatory architecture. La MéMé is an iconic manifestation of Participation Architect's ambition to counter Modern Architect's obsession for positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance, and self-interest. Confrontational to that extent that Lucien Kroll and his work have been spit out, his architecture mocked for its chaotic aesthetics (Van Gerrewey, 2016) and the architect pushed aside because of his stubborn fixation to build differently, according to his ideas. In the search for his (be)longing, Participation Architect seems not always to manage to move away from Modern Architect entirely; he can be quite convinced of his own -participation oriented- authority.

With the first wave of citizen involvement, also the discourse of Participation Architect has managed to percolate. Mela (Mela, 2016, 2017, 2018) addresses a new peak of citizen involvement -the second wave- occurs in the '90s. As participation -in its organized (Petrescu, 2005) and controllable form- is becoming a must, top-down investments are made in urban development aimed at socio-spatial improvements. These investments are often supported by European funding and favor post-industrial neighborhoods.

In Brussels, this second wave of citizen involvement in uAD resonates with the operationalization of the Neighborhood Contracts in '93. For this planning instrument, the BCR's cooperates with its municipalities to invest in the urban renewal of precarious neighborhoods, a tool that has been applauded for a more far-reaching approach to citizen participation (Degros & De Cleene, 2013; Doucet, 2015b). The Contracts' method to involve a representative group of local stakeholders within the project definition phase stands in relation to growing general interest to involve citizens in urban development. Following the claim the '90s welcomed the second wave of citizen involvement in uAD, I propose to recognize the second turn in Brussels urbanism concerning the operationalization of the Neighborhood Contracts. This turn collides with the political autonomy of the BCR in '89 and new planning instruments such as the first Regional Development Plan and the '91 Organic Ordinance on Planning and Town Planning. These planning innovations are claimed by Evert Lagrou (2000) to still be in need of a more democratic approach.

In this nineties, context Participation Architect has to step away from his oppositional position. He likes to see Brussels urbanism is taking a step forward considering citizen involvement. To him, the second turning point marks an essential shift in Brussels urbanism moving from participation through consultation to-ward participation through partnership (Degros & De Cleene, 2013; Doucet, 2015b). As he found him-self recognition, Participation Architect feels uncomfortable with the limit this institutionalized position imposes on him. By public actors, funded processes of citizen involvement such as the Neighborhood Contracts, fall under organized participation. The framed -and thus limited- reach of citizen involvement within the Neighborhood Contracts is defined through the hierarchical position that comes with top-down support and investment. After all, not too many people can be directly involved at once, if you want to stay in control.

And then there is still Participation Architect's suspicious awareness of the omnipres-

ence of Modern Architect and Economic Man. Despite the integration of participatory mechanisms in urban planning tools, Participation Architect cannot shake off the idea that decisions are still primarily made behind closed doors.

Concerning this second wave and the proposed second turning point, another iconic architectural realization can be relevant; De Zilvervloot. A.U.A.I. (Atelier d'Urbanisme, d'Architecture et d'Informatique) continued its exploration of participatory architecture in the Netherlands where Dag Boutsen coordinated the design of this mixed building block. As part of a broader urban renewal program that was set in motion by public-private actors, De Zilvervloot was a cantilever for the aimed revitalization of the mono-functional and impoverished Wielwijk. This neighborhood had been constructed according to modernist ideals (Huisman, 2006).

In this second wave, Participation Architect still seems to be fiercely driven by his hunger for (be)longing; quality of life and democratization remain his central goals. He seems to have lost his oppositional streak; moving away from a dichotomy thinking. Can Dag Boutsen's agency within the design of the Zilvervloot be the embodiment of the next generation of Participation Architect? Or is he maybe his first mutation? One that explores how to realize his goals in collaboration with Economic Man and Modern Architect? But does Participation Architect's mutation then accept the commodification of the urban livelihoods and how can he achieve more far-reaching democracy within a hierarchical, top-down framework?

Anyhow the '90's boom didn't last and the financial crisis made Economic Man play out the austerity card. With the severe cut back that followed the second wave -thriving of public investments- eroded. The investment in participation is still acting, among others illustrated by the Incubators of Public Spaces, a JPI Urban Europe research project that invested in the development of novel digital tools for participation in urbanism.

Today, more is moving; Mela situates the third wave of citizen involvement in urbanism in the contemporary context. A more hands-on and constructive grassroots movement is emerging. A growth of self-organized interventions in the urban context is taking place (Mela, 2016, 2017, 2018). These come under the label of "tactical urbanism" (Mike Lydon, 2014; M Lydon, Bartman, Garcia, Preston, & Woudstra, 2012), "Selfcity initiatives" (BRAL, 2016), "Make\_Shift" interventions in the city (Ferguson, 2014), "City Makers" (Pakhuis De Zwijger, 2016a, 2016b), "handmade urbanism" (Rosa & Weiland, 2013)... These practices reveal a "spatial agency" that consciously moves away from the "architectural" to avoid a fixation with the built and the tangible object (Awan, Schneider, & Till, 2013). Despite the abundant amount of literature discussing contemporary spatial agencies, this third wave is still foggy. Though it hints for an altered approach to citizen involvement. One that more orients toward an equal collaboration; public-civic partnership and commoning seem to be the emerging keywords.

In Brussels, a like-minded approach can be found at Josaphat's ground. As one of many loci for self-organized civic initiatives in Brussels, Josaphat illustrates a search of citizens -among which architects- to challenge the austerity dogma of Economic Man. They do so by questioning the consumption culture and the commodification of the urban realm. Similar to the exemplary cases discussed in the literature on spatial agency (Awan et al., 2013) and tactical urbanism (M Lydon et al., 2012), also the commons architecture at Josaphat looks to create tactile responses to emerging matters of concern. There seems to be something more to these small-scale, everyday interventions.

The work of Commons Josaphat and the agencies brought together in Josaph'Aire have



00.06.fig. 3 – La MéMé. Photo by Bastin Evrard.

**‘68 La MéMé – A.U.A.I.** as described in the conversation with Dag Boutsen  
 These student dwellings were realized in close consultation with the future inhabitants through an intensive participatory process. The design –that has been mocked for its chaotic appearance protest against the idea of standardized production and functional rationalism from the modernist movement. The building acknowledges the complexity and importance of the organic. The user and the environment of the built project are positioned centrally in its design. One of the essential principles is the adaptability of the built spaces within an open frame. The architectural output is desired to be chaotic and lived and goes in against the, at that time conventional, architecture culture (Bouchain, 2013; BOZAR, 2016, June-September; De Graaf, 2016; L. Kroll, 2005; S. Kroll & Kroll, 2015; Vermeersch, 2016).



00.06.fig. 4 – De Zilvervloot, image by Dag Boutsen.

**‘98 de Zilvervloot – A.U.A.I** as described in the conversation with Dag Boutsen A.U.A.I.’s design for the housing complex won the competition for this project due to its participatory and open character. The project –coordinated by Dag Boutsen– involved a series of intensive workshops. This four years enduring design process allowed for “de Zilvervloot” to unfold into a “structure of happiness”. “Nest-warmte” (coziness / hygge), identity, and nostalgia are a few of the typical characteristics that encouraged the inhabitants of the housing project to blog about their new cozy home with a strong sense of pride. The project could build on the experience of citizen participation obtained through the design and construction of la MéMa. Attention was given to invest in the spontaneous and visible coming together of different needs and desires. Balconies, greenhouse-like extensions, terraces, and a patchwork façade spatially reflect this ambition through their stratification. The design of the building’s façade followed the needs of the future inhabitants for them to enjoy daylight at maximum. As a built statement, de Zilvervloot also managed to generate a new dynamic in its broader environment. The intervention interrupted the monotonous urban fabric that surrounded the Admiraalsplein in Dordrecht (NL) and managed to revive and humanize this by the CIAM doctrine inspired neighborhood (Boutsen, 2016; Huisman, 2006).



been mapped along a broad range of civic initiatives by diverse platforms. Each in their way these platforms have aimed to bring out a sample to represent the movement they see emerging in the lively civic scene of self-organized urban interventions in Brussels, Belgium, Europe and beyond. To start in Brussels, the Selfcity project by BRAL has interacted with Commons Josaphat and Recup'Kitchen together with other Brussels initiatives. The Selfcity project aims to provide an analysis and panorama of "a new generation of citizen initiatives" (BRAL, 2016). In the "Selfcity BXL" publication, BRAL maps and discusses a selection of projects to claim a movement is emerging from the bottom-up that works on ecology, democracy and solidarity in Brussels.

Furthermore the work of Commons Josaphat, the Maison des Possibles, Recup'Kitchen, Jardin Latinis and/or Josaph'Aire have been represented along like-minded initiatives within the atlas of Vicinia, the participatory map of Belgique mode d'emploi, the "We-Traders" exhibition by the Goethe Institut, the mapping of citizen initiatives by Oikos, the festival of Le temps des communs, and the Burgervuur platform of De Wakkere Burger. The last representation recently (June 2018) resulted in awarding Josaph'Aire with the "Burgervuur prijs", valuing the nonprofit as a representative agent within a broader movement of citizen initiatives. Also, exchange and interaction had been established with the Gent Commons Transition project by the P2P Foundation and stad Gent, the "Tour des bien communs lillois à vélo" organized by Interphaz and the Sharing Cities network, evolving around Shareable. Apart from highlighting the Josaphat agents as part of a broader third wave movement, these platforms, and their mappings reveal a richness of third wave practices driven by civic agents and a "can do" mentality (BRAL, 2016). Not seldom these third wave practices are explicitly connected to the commons movement. The many self-organized community-oriented practices in the urban environment that are being mapped by numerous associations illustrate the third wave practices bear potential. Whether if these initiatives can establish a third turning point for urbanism in Brussels is still an open question.

These third wave practices relate to exemplary cases in Brussels urban planning that have informed Benoît Moritz (2009) to propose a hypothesis for another turn in Brussels urbanism. In his presentation "Comment construire Bruxelles? Une mise en question des outils contemporains de planification et de fabrication de la ville" at the French-speaking Architecture Faculty in Brussels; La Cambre (ULB) he discusses exemplary projects that he relates with what here is described as third wave practices. His hypothesis for another turning point connects to important cases of uAD in Brussels happening in 2009, such as the Tour&Taxis urban development and the redesign of the Flagey square, as well as to at that time new planning instruments, such as the Richtschema / Schéma Directeur (strategic masterplan). He points at 2003-2005 as a critical moment hinting for a change in Brussels urbanism. This shift, Moritz claims, moves from a consultative (informing and consulting) towards a participative approach (also including concertation and co-production).

Moritz makes clear something is in motion in Brussels urban planning. Projects like the renewal of Flagey might be exemplary due to the initiative that civic agents took up themselves to demand another, more desired design proposal; the urban activist behind this self-organized participation, consider the collaboration with the public stakeholders they had obtained as a failure (Bergilez et al., 2005). The Thurn and Taxis development as indeed undergone significant improvements after more than 25 years of urban struggle, yet today it remains symbolic for the still happening Brusselization process (BRAL,

2017a). It seems like the by Moritz honored Richtschema tool has missed its effect as its strategic guidelines are poorly respected. The frictions emerging around Josaphat bring up the most recent reform of planning tools (CoBAT and RPA) is not very promising when it comes to citizen involvement (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017; Collectif des signataires, 2018).

It is too soon to cheer for a third pivotal moment in Brussels urbanism, yet the third wave triggers cautious optimism. An optimism that can be strengthened when looking at Turin (Italy) where Mela sees an exciting development happening related to the contractual collaborations between citizens and the public. The implementation of the “local regulation on collaboration between citizens and the municipality to care, regenerate and reuse urban commons” provides citizens with the rights and responsibilities to use public buildings and sites for the general interest (Ciaffi & Saporito, 2017; Mela, 2016, 2018). It entails an organizational model that supports administrations to look for collaboration with citizens on an equal base and to approach them as individuals and communities that that can work in the care of the commons. Apart from the regulation on the urban commons, contemporary urban planning might not (yet) recognize or want to favor commoning practices as a means to share power and instigate democratization in urbanism. However, commons advocate Francesca Ferguson (2014, p. 16) advocates the potential of urban commons to “lay the groundwork for a more lasting shift in planning criteria for contested urban spaces, or those up for development”.

The ‘60s counter approach of Participation Architect has made –along with the second wave of citizen involvement- space for a critical, constructive spatial agency. An agency that –in its third wave now- thrives of the self-organization of citizens who claim a recognized and equal position -beyond participation. A movement that furthermore questions the obsession with the architectural in itself. Participation Architect is in an existential crisis here. His (be)longing in search of quality of life and democratization still stand strong. What could his contemporary mutation look like and what altering attitude to uAD would this embody? It is clear that inspired by Economic Man’s altering models –community, acrobats, and sewers and reapers-, it is time to shake of the underdog position and claim position as an altered normative model in the spotlight of Modern Architect.

This opens the question on what type of iconic –if still required- architectural –if still relevant- realization –or process- might symbolize an aspired third turning point in Brussels urbanism? Are there seeds to be found in Josaphat’s house-garden-and-kitchen architecture and its underlying commoning? Or maybe in Commons Josaphat’s proposal for a model building block “en bien commun”?

Did I already say something electrifying is in the air?



It is my first official day at work as doctoral researcher. I kick off by restudying the application form for the Incubators of Public Spaces research project (Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium, 2013; J Verbeke & Pak, 2014). It is in the framework of this JPI Urban Europe project that I will conduct my doctoral research and –what I at that time couldn't imagine- design practice.

I must confess that I am highly skeptical about the technological side that defines the core of the proposed innovation. From my masters' dissertation experience at the Boerenhof in Ghent, I approach participatory process in uAD as a human-oriented matter (Van Reusel, 2014). Face-to-face contact and hands-on action were the central drivers to engage locals in collectively self-building their aspired for a neighborhood park in activist temporary use. How could a digital platform replace such a process? I can still vividly recall the rewarding feeling the neighbors of the Boerenhof and I shared when we saw the direct result of our work at the field. The joy of creating something together with your bare hands. The naturalness with which you share dreams and ideas and kindle enthusiasm in each other. The friendship, but also frustration you find in such a serendipitous process. At that time I did not realize –nor did the Incubators application articulate- that a digital participation process does not assume neglect of the offline, it compliments it.

In the project application I do can read many of my research triggers (see 00.03.fig. 28); the self-organization of people, the need for public, private and civic actors to work with each other from an early phase on, the notion of "place" defined by Augé (1995) as a loaded with meaning and identity... What instigates is the promise to test the co-creation of interventions from crowdsourcing over 3D planning and crowdfunding to its actual realization.

Diving into the list of references that come with Incubators' application, the book on "New approaches to urban planning" by Horelli et al. (2013) convinces me. The field of uAD is situated in a digital era that has its impact on the self-organization of communities and as such its potential for what Liisa Horelli (2013) calls "participatory E-planning" should not be neglected.

Let's give this a try.

I have been asked to interview Dag Boutsen as a contribution to the book "*Participatiegolven: Reflecties op social-ruimtelijke kwesties*". The goal is to reflect participatory practices in architecture from a historical perspective.

Dag and I meet at our Faculty's campus (Sint-Lucas Brussels) to prepare the interview. To good habit Dag immediately starts by making interesting connections and overloads me with a proliferating range of anecdotic facts, revealing relations and sharp criticisms. Beforehand I had proposed to structure the interview according to three architectural projects representing three different periods. La MéMé by atelier Kroll would be illustrative for the '68 movement, while Dag's Zilvervloot could mark '98. However, I am puzzled about a contemporary project. I would not put up front my practice –the Boerenhof and Josaphat- as these have not reached such established architectural results. I suggest

the work of the Brussels office Suede 36 and the Parckfarm project at Tour & Taxis. But Dag shares my lust for imagining and picks up on my proposal to play with the dates; we could speculate what 2018 has to offer.

In the meeting room, Dag lays out a series of magazines and booklets on the table. As first, he picks up the publication “New Amsterdam” by Pakhuis De Zwijger (2016a) which provides an overview of what they label “City Makers” projects. Dag enthusiastically shares his insights: *“The magazine by Pakhuis De Zwijger reveals something about the contemporary movement and opens the debate on who is making the city today. It is clear that this is not just the work of urban planners. There is a richness of community-based initiatives that impact on the urban. Starting from their needs and desires, people self-organize and contribute to the local (re)generation of their city. There is an incredibly rich diversity in these initiatives.”*

Although Dag might not explicitly call it as such, he discusses the movement I see in the urban commons scene, yet in doing so, he also addresses some of the limits these have. *“The practice of City Makers is wonderful, and happens all over Europe; often these initiatives act on a small scale. Like what you do -both in Ghent and now in Brussels-, it would fit in the list. These small initiatives are booming now! But they remain small. They offer common solutions, but they are stuck in the temporary and are often very improvised. If you look from this perspective to the ‘68 La MéMé and ‘98 Zilvervlood, than I miss an iconic character, which I believe belongs to field of architecture. As they are built, their statements act on a long term. So for ‘18, we should think how these City Makers might further develop into an architectural version.”*

## 00.06.02 Something is in motion

In this section, I will build up my argument that as the field of participatory design is in motion (00.06.02), Participation Architect needs to re-evaluate his position. I will look beyond participation. According to the shifts I see occurring in the field of PD I will look for Participation Architect's contemporary mutation in (b) the shifting away from the "architectural" in itself as it orients at a more transversal and transdisciplinary position. "No longer Participation Architect" –like design in general- seems to be ready to move beyond the (modernist) obsession with the object. Subsequently, I will look for inspiration in (c) the commons movement where he seeks for public-civic collaboration and even citizen power. First I will dive into the potential to be found in (a) the digital opportunities Participation Architect has at hand today.

### a. Participation Architect enters the digital era

Like the broader field of participatory design, Participation Architect is unfolding. In the modernist era he has developed a strong identity in opposition to Modern Architect, but with time –surfing along the by Mela (Mela, 2016, 2017, 2018) claimed waves of citizen involvement in urbanism- he has been questioning himself. He earned his marks in Brussels along the -by Levy (2013) marked- first and the –by me proposed- second turning point in its urban planning. Today the state of being of Participation Architect is unclear, as is the hypothetical third pivotal moment for Brussels urbanism. It seems Participation Architect is ready for an update; toward Participation Architect 2.0, or maybe, instead, a more altering mutation?

One aspect shows not to have changed though; Participation Architect is in search of what I have named "(be)longing"; when it comes to people's livelihoods, he remains driven to improve the general quality of life and support democratization processes. Within the transition from the first to the second wave of citizen involvement in urbanism, Participation Architect has lost a bit of his confronting attitude. He has been exploring collaborations with Modern Architect and Economic Man and has had a taste of what it might be like to work within the institutions responsible for the urban (re)development. He has booked some excellent results, but he feels somehow out of place. In how far does his softening stance to Modern Architect –who has weakened his posture as well- is in betrayal with his core goals?

Resonating with the overall evolution of PD and the claimed third wave of citizen involvement, Participation Architect is ready to take a different turn. He sees potential in the recent technological advancements. In this digital era, Participation Architect is excited to explore how novel technologies can assist him to re-invent himself and his practice.

Being embedded in the field of PD and its Scandinavian tradition, Participation Architect feels a great fascination for technological advancements (Saad-Sulonen, 2013). He sees a significant window of opportunity in the new media (Pak, 2016) that are penetrating every nook of society (Manzini, 2015b), his curiosity is triggered. Especially the web has made a culture possible in which more people can find each other to share, participate and collaborate on ideas and information. In the words of Charlie Leadbeat-

er (2008), the web is a “potent platform for creativity and innovation”. It allows for “distributed systems” (Biggs et al., 2010; Manzini, 2015b) to facilitate distributed knowledge and decision-making. Rigid, vertical forms of organization are being challenged by the more fluid and horizontal –commons-oriented- ones (Bauwens, 2005; Leadbeater, 2008; Manzini, 2015a). Following these lines of thought, the on-going socio-technological advancements that characterize this era could be at the heart of a democratization process and challenge the still present doctrine of Modern Architect in the design of the urban realm. Seeing this potential, the eyes of Participation Architect are twinkling. Digital tools in urban planning offer a ground for new approaches, especially for self-organization (Horelli et al., 2013). If it still needs to be said; Participation Architect is delirious about the opportunities offered by this digital era.

He seems ready –even thrilled- for an update. What Participation Architect in this digital era could evolve into, remains an open question. To get some hints, Josaphat as living lab at large forms an interesting ground. After all, the site offers a symbolic scene for the struggle with Modern Architect’s doctrine in Brussels today. And within its entangled identities as an academic and civic research laboratory, Josaphat also consolidates the ground for the Incubators of Public Spaces research project with its focus on technological innovation for participation in urbanism. This particular entry to Josaphat as Brussels living lab within a JPI Urban Europe research is entrenched in Josaphat’s electrifying air. An air from which Participation Architect can start to grasp the potential of his contemporary update.

The Incubators project played out at Josaphat through this doctoral research and design practice. For three years I have worked at Josaphat as architect-researcher for the Incubators consortium. As part of this international and interdisciplinary team I worked on the development of the Incubators platform, the research on its theoretical and practical framework, the experimentation in the urban living labs, the reflection on the results and the dissemination of the findings. For the work package concerned with the running of the Brussels living lab, a collaboration was set up with BRAL as the local partner. As discussed in section 00.03.02.b “An incubator”, the interest for Josaphat as Incubators living lab has significantly been informed by the work of Commons Josaphat, an actor that –don’t believe it is a coincidence- fits in Mela’s third wave of citizen involvement. At this overlap between the Incubators research, the happenings at Josaphat, and the broader third wave, Participation Architect here can find relevant insights on his potential –digitalized- up-date.

Participation Architect has a great interest in the Incubators project, especially as its ambition is to “provide the means to grow and care for places” (Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium). More precise it is Incubators’ objective to involve people in the making of public places that are loaded with identity and meaning. The project starts from the stance that place is formed through people’s use and interaction of spaces. Through a digital platform, Incubators of Public Spaces aims to support people to have their every-day experience become integrated into processes of multi-level planning and distributed decision-making. For this, the research project looks into tools for digital engagement such as co-creative software, 3D environments and crowdfunding instruments (Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium, 2013).

More particularly Participation Architect is interested in the objectives of this JPI Urban Europe research that underline the central aim to improve the quality of urban space through facilitating co-creation and distributed decision-making –his (be)longing

is in there. The Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium (2013) describes its main four goals in the project proposal:

1. Co-creation of policies and local-governance; the project application explicitly states the ambition to enable new methods and technologies to achieve “active participation”; that is a partnership-based approach in which citizens are actively engaged in policy-making considering their urban environment.
2. Developing a new methodological approach (through ICT) to support the self-organization of places.
3. Implementing a software platform that enhances the planning of a city area as a co-creative emergent process.
4. Test the Incubator’s methodology and technology in real-world experiences through three urban living labs in Western Europe.

Incubators does not show an interest in the potential of socio-technological developments for participation in urbanism; the project outline also links it directly to “self-organization” in urban planning. In the search for new –technologically supported- approaches for participatory urban planning, Joanna Saad-Sulonen (2013) brings up the by Boonstra and Boelens (2011, p. 113) defined notion of self-organization in uAD, addressing “initiatives that originate in civil society from autonomous community-based networks of citizens, who are part of the urban system but independent of government procedures.” Like Alfredo Mela’s (Mela, 2016, 2018) third wave of citizen involvement, the Incubators consortium acknowledges the argument of Horelli et al. (2015) that citizen-led initiatives in their self-organized urban activism create space for another type of civic involvement in urban development. Through supporting self-organized micro-interventions in public space at the Brussels urban living lab, the Incubators tool aims to contribute to the movement of the third wave and to support self-organization to impact on urban planning (Van Reusel, Verbeke, Mauro, Caneparo, & Rolfo, 2015). Something that Participation Architect should explore.

To support the creation of self-organized micro-interventions the Incubators methodology and technology thrives of ICT advancements such as crowdsourcing (CS), civic crowdfunding (CF), online voting and 3D modeling. These instruments harness the web’s allowance for larger representations of communities and the bringing together of a more holistic vision. The Incubators team (Magnani, Timmermans, & Karadimitriou, 2017) recognizes the impact these tools have for urban planning and design, more particularly to challenge the conventional modes of participatory design processes (Sakamoto & Nakajima, 2014). Established –organized- participation procedures often limit the number of participants as too large numbers might render the situation unmanageable (Magnani et al., 2017). In contrast, the new technology makes it easier to reach out to a broad range of locals and their knowledge as experts in everyday experience. This potential urges to mobilize and integrate this distributed intelligence and to enhance the history of locals, their social relations and their dreams for a better future (Wallin, 2013).

The Incubators researchers (BRAL, 2013; Magnani et al., 2017) acknowledges CS and (civic) CF have become –especially in the field of design- resourceful means to bring up innovative solutions (Sakamoto & Nakajima, 2014). The (hoped for) economically and socially sustainable outcomes thrive on contributions of a broad group of actors that as such engage in co-creation. According to my Incubators colleagues (Magnani et al., 2017), CS and CF could be hung to the sixth rung –partnership- of Arnstein’s (1969)

ladder. However, they are cautious this requires a social and political view of the implementation of these technological advancements.

Crowdsourcing in itself offers a way for design to tackle pressing issues and provide innovative design solutions by tapping into the distributed intelligence that ICT's developments offer (Magnani et al., 2017; Zhao & Zhu, 2014). Apart from the aggregation of knowledge, CS also provides access for non-expert knowledge –or the lived expertise- to provide a different perspective from which to deal with design questions. By bringing in the crowd, the view of the design professional –Participation Architect- as the all-knowing expert is questioned (Brabham, 2012; Magnani et al., 2017). Further on Participation Architect sees in CS a means to shift the conventional methods of planning practices and enhances PD through a more “ubiquitous, flexible and even more holistic manner” (Magnani et al., 2017). CS can go beyond a feedback loop and build up to imagining, optimizing, drafting and/or idealizing the urban environment. CS for Participation Architect as such is not only a technical tool but also can contribute to the political stakes of democratization; empowering people to share ideas and build upon those of others allows them to step in the planning process through active engagement (Hill & Boyer, 2013; Magnani et al., 2017).

Civic crowdfunding allows for community-based initiatives to find capital and is by Incubators (Magnani et al., 2017) considered as an exciting tool to support participation through self-organization (Patti & Polyak, 2017). The integration of civic CF related to urban planning and governmental support is recently explored in practice. Civic CF as part of PD in urban development stills need to be further experimented and researched but offers a site of potential for instigating other ways of uAD.

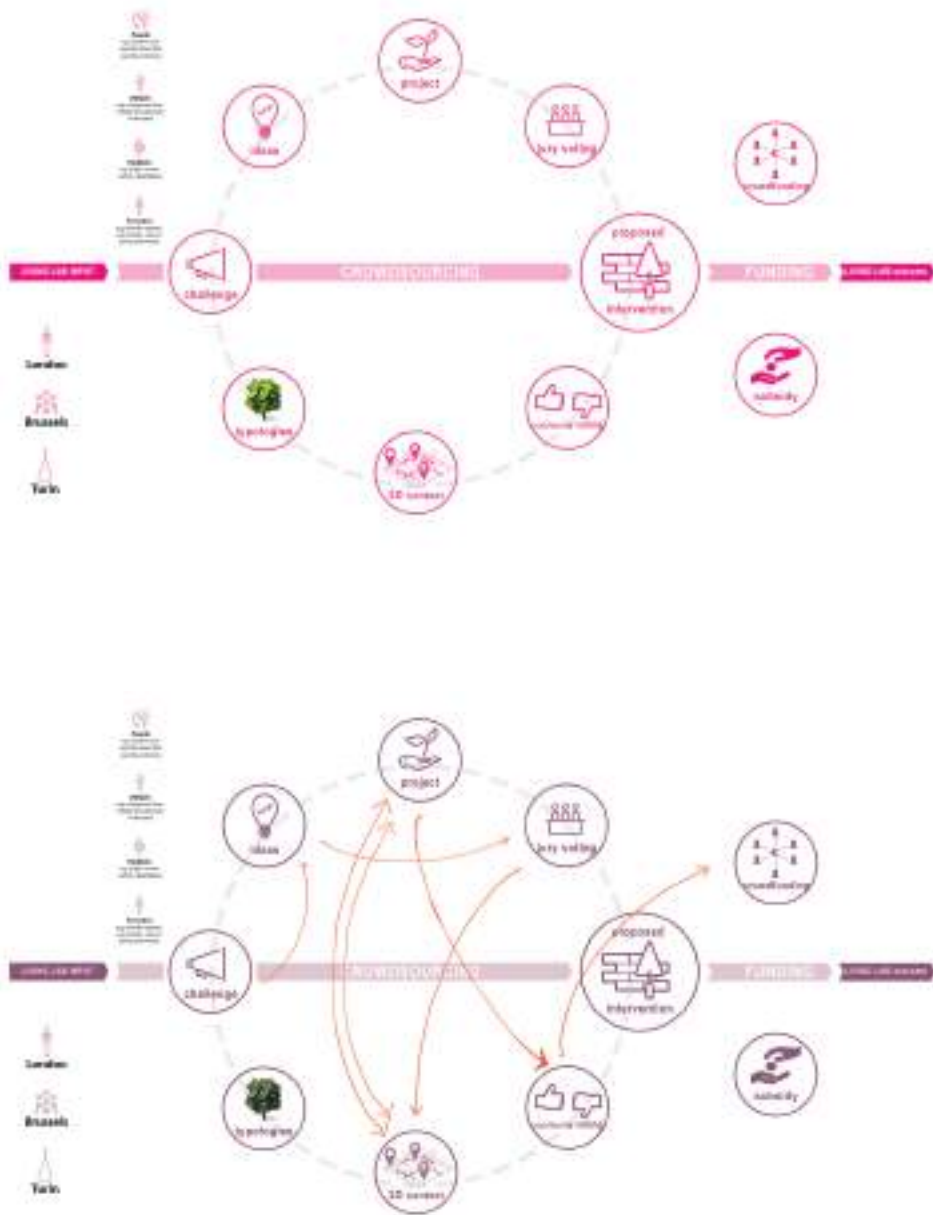
Participation Architect sees both CS and CF are growing momentum as they resonate with a sensed frustration considering the lack of transparency in city making. Incubators values their link with self-organization in urban planning and as such aimed to implement CS and civic CF in support of community-based initiatives such as those proliferating at Josaphat. Participation Architect sees the link with Mela's third wave movement. Potential is brimming. Though he agrees with the Incubators team, it is about time to move beyond the theoretical and explore the combined potential of CS and civic CF in practice (Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium, 2013; Magnani et al., 2017).

In follow up of this ambition the Incubators platform is designed as a modular system in which CS, community or jury-based voting sessions, a 3D visualization model and CF can be combined and adapted according to case-specific demands (see 00.06.fig. 5). In this way, the platform's design aspires to bridge the conception, localization, decision-making and (budgetary) realization of micro-interventions for their allocated public space.

The implementation at the Brussels living lab was situated at Josaphat where the testing of the platform was connected to a call for ideas or temporary use interventions to join the already existing communities at Josaphat's southwest corner. The original goal was to connect the use of the platform to the official call for temporary use that the MSI is –still today- planning to organize. The timing did not match and thus -in accordance with this public stakeholder- the scope of the call had been consciously limited to not evoke confusion with the on-going official planning process for the future district and its upcoming (staged) participation process.

With BRAL as a local partner and in concertation with the MSI, the following process



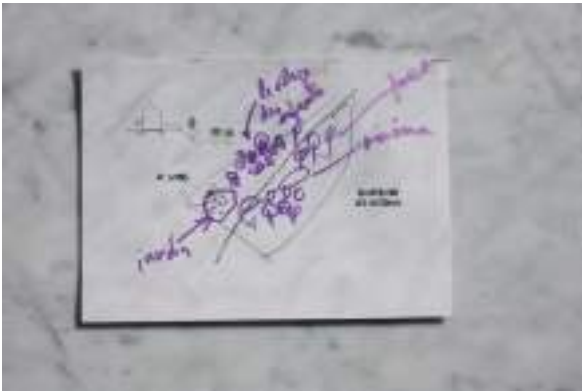


00.06.fig. 5 – The Incubators platform is envisioned as a modular system.

00.06.fig. 6 – The chosen, yet not fully realized, assemblage of the Incubators modular platform for the Brussels living lab.



00.06.fig. 7 – The closing exhibition of the Incubators project, hosted in the Forum, November 2017.



00.06.fig. 8 – Postcards from the “imagine” workshop, July 2015.



00.06.fig. 9 – Incubators pop-up stand in front of Josaphat, July 2016.

and usage of the Incubators platform was set up front (see 00.06.fig. 6): challenge – idea submission – simultaneous community and jury voting – project submission / 3D environment – community voting/crowdsourcing (see 00.05.fig05). However due to the delays in the technological development of the Incubators platform only the first three phases were tested within the timing of the research project.

Throughout the testing phase, the online process was supported by offline and on-site workshop assisting users to propose ideas and vote for their preferences through the digital platform. In November 2017 the Incubators project concluded in Brussels with a final exhibition of the crowdsourced ideas and a debate involving some of the participants (see 00.06.fig. 7). Furthermore, the jury voting was combined with a feedback session in which the invited -local and professional- experts were asked to discuss the overall organization of the Incubators platform and the 3D environment in its final stage of development at that time (Van Reusel, Verbeke, et al., 2017).

Before the testing phase of the Incubators platform, experiences with offline crowdsourcing and a pilot case of civic crowdfunding –Recup’Kitchen- were set up and analyzed throughout the Incubators research. These experiences include the open call for ideas organized by the citizen platform of Commons Josaphat (discussed in 00.03.02.b), the “imagine” postcard workshop (see 00.06.fig. 8), a round table workshop on temporary/transitional use, the crowdfunding of Recup’Kitchen through the Brussels CF platform “Growfunding” and an offline simulation workshop of the Incubators platform.

The Incubators overall research and the testing at the Josaphat living lab, in particular, have resulted in different learnings that are brought together in the Incubators research report. In the context of the discussion of this doctoral research and design practice I will focus on the learnings relevant to Participation Architect his –and with him the broader field of uAD- potential update concerning contemporary technological advancements. For this, I will discuss several of the conclusions that are presented in Deliverable 7.5 of the Incubators report “*Ex-post evaluation of the Incubators in Brussel, London, and Turin.*”

° The first lesson Participation Architect 2.0 needs to take into account; it is not because you have a promising technological tool at hand that those in power are willing to play along. The testing of the Incubators platform at the Brussels living lab had trouble to set up a true collaboration with the MSI, who at the end has the official authority when it comes to the temporary use of Josaphat.

To start with, the MSI was not involved in the setting up of the Incubators project and thus had no affiliation with this research project. Though the Brussels Incubators team –KU Leuven and BRAL had managed to set up a concertation process to take into account the feedback and concerns of the MSI, an actual collaboration seemed unfeasible. The unaligned timing of the Incubators project with the agenda of the Josaphat development, and a –rightful - lack of trust in the developing technologies were given as reasons. As such there was no certainty for those who submitted ideas for Josaphat’s temporary use that these would be realized when getting through the voting process. Not much democratization can be found here.

° The MSI’s suspicion toward the functioning of the Incubators technology seemed at place. As second learning; new and shiny does not always align with functional and useful. It looks like Modern Architect’s hunger for newness and the spectacular is not far away here. In all its innovation the Incubators platform lacked basic user-friendliness. This resulted in a significant threshold in the use of the platform, to that extent it

often countered accessibility and became a barrier more than an aid. For the Incubators experience and its small scale implementation at Josaphat, the digital platform hosting the call for ideas might have blocked more potential users than it managed to convince.

° Thirdly, Participation Architect 2.0 has to watch out is the digital technologies offer promising opportunities, the feasibility to make it happen seems to be less evident. The modular structure of the Incubators platform carried the promise of flexibility and case-specific adaptation. However, the concept turned out to be too demanding to develop within the timing and budget of the Incubators project. Though the first experiments together with the offline simulation workshop and the experimentation with the pilot case for crowdfunding brought up the potential of this modular assemblage. To live up the expectations, multiple feedback loops are necessary.

° Lesson four; the possibility to reach out to big numbers does not mean you will manage to do so, nor that this is always necessary. At Josaphat –and also the other Incubators living labs- the number of users that participated was limited. For Josaphat, the Brussels Incubators team defined multiple reasons for this, of which one was the lack of certainty about the possibility of being able to have an impact when participating at the call for ideas.

Furthermore the call was not distributed at large and didn't take full advantage of the potential of social media and other ICT to reach out broadly. This stands with the first lesson, connected to the weak collaboration with the power holding partner (MSI). Moreover, the jury of experts brought up that for Josaphat's limited scope it is more interesting to attract a couple of participants that are willing to truly invest and realize their proposed micro-intervention, rather than to have thousands of ideas that nobody will pursue.

° Five, -it is not all bad- new digital tools can engage otherwise not reached users. Despite the small scale diffusion of the Incubators' call for ideas, the testing of the platform resulted in the engagement of users that otherwise might not have found their way. The digital call reached out to a partially different public while also the activities organized around the call urged the organizers to more actively look for people willing to participate.

° Allowing people to submit ideas from home allows for more considerate proposals, is the sixth finding Participation Architect 2.0 can consider. Most of the ideas submitted through the Incubators platform addressed desires and needs that have been recurring in other (offline) crowdsourcing activities. The researchers noticed a difference; those propositions submitted from home had a longer description, and the showed to be given more care and came directly with a visualization to support the idea. The ideas that were submitted via a tablet while standing on Josaphat's ground or in the street were only superficially described (see 00.06.fig. 9).

° The seventh finding for Participation Architect; the use of digital tools does not stand loose from the face-to-face accompaniment. A call to "create an idea" can be a big threshold for many potential participants. Crowdsourcing, after all, can exclude disadvantaged citizens, and therefore it is necessary to take extra actions to empower these (Pak, Chua, & Vande Moere, 2017). For a lot of laypeople, a call to propose micro-interventions seems still to be a too large and too overwhelming question. When the Brussels Incubators team went out in the streets and guided users in submitting their idea, they could assist and inform them.

° Eight, novel tools like crowdfunding have "side-effects" that might be more relevant.



The pilot case for crowdfunding Recup'Kitchen stressed the importance of civic CF as a tool for contributing to forming a community around the project rather than as a means of financing. As such the CF process did not only allow for over 150 people or organizations to contribute and become part of the project, it also triggered volunteers to become active members of the RK team.

° The final and ninth lesson; novel technologies remain but a tool. Both in the overall participatory process as well as during the feedback session with the local jury questions were recurring such as: Who made up the call? Who decides on the order of the modular assemblage? Is there an agreement with the MSI to give the selected ideas also the permission to be realized within the temporary use of Josaphat? The jury challenged their position as "experts" and their legitimacy as decision-makers. As one of the main conclusions of the Incubators experience; the tool's effectiveness seemed tied to the same overall concerns that cause friction at Josaphat considering the underlying decision-making and transparency.

Overall the learnings of the Incubators of Public Spaces research project inform Participation Architect 2.0 to first and foremost stay true to his socio-political goals of (be)longing, to facilitate quality of the every-day environment and a democratization process. Especially the first and ninth point accentuate the importance to have not only citizens but also the decision-makers participate in the project from an early phase on. A lot of critical questions come back to the way the platform is organized and by whom the call, and its process has been planned. Who assembles the modular structure of the platform? Who can contribute and propose ideas (what is the login procedure)? Will the proposed ideas be able to impact? A lot of it shows to come back to democratic decision-making. Self-organization in urban planning might be triggered, but if a closed group of experts has the final say at the end of the CS process, the participatory nature of the process can be put to question.

The anecdotic case considering participatory decision-making for Brussels new metro line illustrates Incubators does not stand alone. Both projects explore what novel technologies such as CS can bring for participation in uAD, yet the metro story makes painstakingly clear how trivial this search can become. In December 2017, 7455 Brussels citizens have voted their say considering the mobility of their city; with a majority of 50,4 percent the call was made that the planned new metro will have silver-colored trains (BRUZZ, 2017b). Completely bypassing the more heated discussions questioning the actual necessity of investing in a new metro line, citizens were offered a two-option choice of color; gold or silver. While BRAL, ARAU, and IEB take the lead to address citizens should have a say in the decision-making of such drastic intervention in the city, the new metro gets a silver-colored participatory sugarcoating.

Let it be a clear warning for Participation Architect. CS and civic CF might be technical drivers for change, yet to challenge the dominance of Modern Architect co-creation, crowd-creativity, urban simulation and the like should not be disconnected from the social, power relations and conventional processes of planning and design (Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium, 2013). In the literature, awareness is brought up that CS and civic CF are biased in favoring already privileged groups and –despite their promise of the great numbers– can never be entirely representative (Davies, 2014; Magnani et al., 2017). As new technological advancements can support Participation Architect, they can be as easily recuperated by Modern Architect and Economic Man looking for legitimacy and control. After all, also in CF, the highest bidder tends to win.

The Incubators platform certainly has the potential to open up uAD to a new form of participation. Though to move beyond concertation, the decision-making in this process needs to be shared at first. New technological developments such as CS and civic CF-like participation- are but a tool that can support Participation Architect in search of his (be)longing. It should not define his identity per se. Guess Participation Architect needs more than a digitally driven update.

#### b. Moving beyond the architectural now?

Josaphat as Incubators living lab informs a critical attitude to technological advancements in support of participation in urbanism. Like participatory design, these are but tools to support an underlying search for (be)longing; to improve the quality of life and to support democratization processes. And as such both participation and technological advancements offer a proper path to walk. However, when it comes to looking at Participation Architect's mutation, it will not be these tools that will necessarily make up his contemporary caricature. If new models need to be defined to push aside Modern Architect's lasting dominance, it seems the "participation" label is to be dropped. What remains then is the "architect". As I have briefly claimed earlier in this chapter, Mela's (2016, 2018) contemporary wave of citizen involvement is connected to a spatial agency that questions the architectural, as an obsession with the built, in itself (Awan et al., 2013; Mela, 2016). Could it be that it is more the "architect" himself that needs to be rethought?

The caricatures of Modern Architect and Participation Architect both have shown to operate outside the strict scope of the architectural profession. I have retraced Modern Architect's attitude in urban planning administrations, planning tools and regulations, and I see him act in the political decision-making when it comes to making the city in Brussels and more specifically at Josaphat. Similarly, Participation Architect found embodiment in sociologists like Jane Jacobs and equally his agency is embedded within governance regulations such as the Aarhus convention (UNECE, 1998). Modern and Participation Architect –in their various embodiments- have remained close to the architectural; urban (re)development is perceived as a process of building and object-oriented transformation. The third wave –the scene in which Josaphat's house-garden-and-kitchen and commoning agencies are embedded- nudges to take a step further and to dare to dissolve the obsession with the architectural in itself. "No-longer Participation Architect" has taken off his clothes and is standing naked, ready to dive into unfamiliar waters.

In the context of the third wave of citizen involvement in urbanism (Mela, 2016, 2018) that I have connected to the notion of "spatial agency" (Awan et al., 2013), the "architectural" seems to have become too limited. Searching for "other ways of doing architecture" (Awan et al., 2013, p. 34), there is a relevant connection to Participation Architect's ambition to transform into a contemporary –third wave-model that can challenge the still omnipresent Modern Architect. Participation Architect is curious to see if he needs to shift away from the architectural. He got the hints that a more transversal and trans-disciplinary attitude is at stake, but to leave behind the architectural, his very being... Participation Architect is hesitating to take the leap.

In the introduction of their book on "Spatial agency: Other ways of doing", Nishat

Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till (Awan et al., 2013) describe their three major criticisms towards the notion of the “architectural”. The first argument condemns the architectural’s obsession with buildings and objects as its primary location. Participation Architect can see how the architectural in itself radiates Modern Architect’s doctrine looking for what is predictable and can be maintained in control. An object-oriented and atemporal regard to architecture neglects the occupation of the built, its temporality, and the relation to society and nature (Awan et al., 2013). This resonates with Manzini’s (2014) argument that design –in general- needs to be redefined as he notices a shift away from the tangible object toward services, experience design, and organizational structures. Such a critical stance to the physical result echoes the concerns around governance, stewardship, and care-taking that are present in the urban commons discourse.

Secondly, Awan et al. claim that the equation of the architectural with the built, makes architecture to be absorbed by market mechanisms. The architectural as building-oriented thus plays in the hands of Economic Man and his commodification hunger. Modern Architect’s desire for newness and the spectacular push the architectural to be iconic, efficient and innovative. Economic Man can rub his hands as architecture aligns to the control and values of neoliberal society (Awan et al., 2013). Participation, in contrast, aims to move away from the economic market that commodifies the urban realm and wants to revalue the urban livelihood as what Awan et al. (2013, p. 28) describe as a “dynamic context of social space”. Paradoxically he orients at iconic architectural realizations.

As the final and third main argument to ditch the architectural in light of an emerging third movement of citizen involvement in urbanism; the architectural assumes the authority of the architect. More precisely the architectural regard on the individual architect as exclusive guide in charge of designing the built aligns with Modern Architect’s discourse. If –as claimed for a spatial agency- the multiple voices and actions of others need to be included into uAD, isn’t it time Participation Architect absorbs a broader agency? Maybe his mutated model can also be an artist, a politician, an anthropologist, a collective, etc.

Though to completely let go of his architectural being, his very much existential starting point? Even if he would want to, how can he abandon the skills, the ways of doing and acting that come with the architectural upbringing? As defended by Awan et al. the architectural behaving remains relevant. To critically question the status-quo and Modern Architect’s dominating stance, the architect needs to extend his role and identity. In search of other ways of doing architecture, the architect needs to look for other ways of being. Participation Architect does not only need to look beyond participation but also beyond the architectural.

In exploration of “other spatial practices” Petrescu (2007) has brought up the notion of “altering practices”. It entails the multiple ways of practicing and the alternative positions that come with it. It involves building, but also teaching, writing, planning, etc. It is a coming together of thinking and doing, academia and activism, politics and the poetic, theory and practice. To Participation Architect –who by now has reached a state of existential crisis- this altering state of practice feels like coming home. What is his being in this altering approach to practice?

Petrescu reveals a direct link between this alterity and the “feminine”. Relating to feminist theories, she demonstrates the reiterated contemporary stance has moved away from the ‘90’s discourse embedded in dichotomy. In the altering mutation of Partici-

pation Architect, he –or rather she- feels relieved to shake off her identity as being in oppositional stance to her counter agent. As claimed by Shalk, Mazé, Kristiansson and Fanni (2017, p. 15) “feminist spatial practice” does not only oppose and question, but it “projects, activates, and enacts alternative norms or ideals”. The alterity of Participation Architect –if only by her feminine gender- makes she stands different within the architectural. Moreover, the feminine is traditionally intertwined with reproductive work, an aspect that also in the field of uAD is regaining attention as essential part of the broader architectural practice, especially in an era where society is seeking to move beyond neo-liberal capitalism (Petrescu & Trogal (Eds.), 2017).

The altering being of the feminine Participation Architect is not only biological but also philosophical and political. The feminist stance articulates -in the words of Schalk et al. (2017, p. 17)- “alternative ways of being (subjectivities) and a diversity of ways for organizing our societies (collectivities)”. Moreover, such a feminine stance has, in the DIY urbanism context, strong affiliation with everyday lived experiences, which are mostly situated in the bottom-up (LaFrombois, 2017).

So it seems the architectural does not to be entirely shaken off. After all Participation Architect might take off her clothes, she cannot undo herself from her own body. She is an architect. But in her flesh and blood -her core architectural being- she is altering.

The altering stance to the architectural practice does not stand alone. A link with the third wave and a potential third turning point in uAD is not only marked by the discussion around spatial agency. Also, other researchers and (architectural) practitioners advocate another way of making the city that contests the still felt pressure of Modern Architect and his associate, Economic Man.

To start with there is a renewed interest emerging in the agency of old school Participation Architect. The work and discourses of his embodiments such as found in the Hansens, Krolls, and Bo Bardi, have recently enjoyed (regained) recognition.

More and more critical architectural practices claim a differential approach to uAD. A movement that is also marking its presence in the renowned scene of the Venice Architecture Biennale. The 2016 edition manifests a break with the venue’s history of staging glamour architecture. Alejandro Aravena’s “REPORTING FROM THE FRONT” made the statement to move away from the prestigious, so to bring up “architecture as an instrument for improving the living conditions of society’s least privileged members” (Trovato, 2016, p. 16). In eastern Europe, the One Architecture Week organized in the Trakiya district in Plovdiv (Bulgaria), manifests a similar shift. In this 2016 edition, the venue focused on the mechanisms of citizen participation, related to the context of socialist collective housing. The program accumulated practitioners and researchers that engaged in debates and workshops to explore the importance of the everyday and the value of living together in the urban environment (One Architecture Week, 2016a).

In Belgium, this shift can be represented through the work of several architects that enlarge the own discipline and reach out to other fields to improve spatial quality and to support broader societal goals. The “You are here” exhibition curated by Alkemade, Declerck and Van Broeck (2018, June-November) at the WTC towers in Brussels –not coincidentally one of the icons of Modern Architect’s failures- assembles work of numerous architects, urbanists and landscape designers that take up such a stance. Fragile and relevant on their own, yet together these practices reveal a potential growing capacity; the exposed spatial practices underline a shift in contemporary uAD. Many of the represented architects can embody altering architectural practices.

Though, the number of teams that purely is made up out of architects and/or function as an architecture office is somewhat limited. The in Antwerp based RE-ST combines architectural practice and research in which they aim to expand their spatial practice to not-building. This office questions how far the need for space equals the need to build something new. This practice goes in against its self-interest –no new building, after all, means no assignment for the architect- in favor of saving open space and resources. The Brussels MAMA approaches maintenance of places as an architectural practice. Moving away from the object, they research care-taking and its organizational structure. Rotor Deconstruction then has the formation of a company. The Brussels-based team saves building elements from large scale deconstruction sites for re-use. This is not as evident as it might seem, because recuperated materials do not come with predict-able and well-measured data. Rotor also develops scenarios to foster reuse of building materials, which guide decision-makers in the creation of their policies.

On the list of exhibited practices, also anthropologists, artist laboratories, jurists and academics can be found. Though most of the practices exhibited in the, You are here exhibition expand even beyond and entails a hybrid in which also citizens are embedded. Also, collaborations with public and private actors and academia are frequently brought up when leafing through the catalog. One of the examples is BoerenBrusselPaysans that works on strategies to claim space for food production within the urban realm. The Antwerp Open Promotor Platform then brings civic, public and private agents together in search of instruments that can empower co-production in the (re)development of the city. The collective Stad in de Maak in Rotterdam consists of designers, makers, and residents that share an agenda to extract real estate from the speculative market. Bringing housing and working environments in their guardianship, they make the city without the intermingling stranglehold of Economic Man.

The You are here expo also opens one of the WTC towers' floors to offer space to urban activism of all sorts. Under the title "The future is here" the curators (Alkemade et al., 2018, June-November) aim to represent the richness of already ongoing research projects and experiments that give direction to develop more sustainable solutions to the broader matters of concern and wicked issues at stake. Projects such as "Brussels as Food-enabling City", "Metropolitan Landscapes Brussels" and "Gedeelde Mobiliteit, Gedeelde Ruimte", could have easily be accompanied by the civic research of Commons Josaphat or de-bates evolving around Josaph'Aire.

It is clear; the Josaphat agents are not the only ones looking for ways to deal with the grip of Modern Architect and Economic Man. Altering architectural practices are out there. Josaphat's air takes part in these more far-reaching energies. The above-discussed practices reveal that altering Participation Architect does not act alone. She is accompanied by many other professionals and collaborates with public, private and civic agencies. These last –third wave practices- seem to increasingly play their role in uAD. Before to reshape the model of "beyond Participation Architect", let's not bypass people and their self-organized agency. There have been multiple clues hinting that the many third wave practices that are citizen-based and show to have a strong affiliation with the urban commons movement.

### c. Toward a practice of urban commoning?

Looking for the contemporary mutation of Participation Architect, the unfolding PD scene had provided clues to look into technological advancements such as experimented by Incubators at Josaphat. A tendency to aim for transversal and transdisciplinary working aligns with the general shift to move away from the object-oriented design practice; an altering stance to the “architectural” is at stake. An additional hint brings up the (urban) commons movement and its enhancement of self-organization and citizen power. Mela’s third wave of citizen involvement and the sample of mappings of such third wave practices also brought up a strong connection to the commons. And then there is also still Josaphat’s ground that as living lab at large entails a commons lab pioneered by Commons Josaphat. Altering Participation Architect could be a commoner.

I have introduced the movement around the commons in section 00.04.01 “Reconstructed experiences of urban commoning”. Within this movement, the urban commons is one of many galaxies that links the –originally natural- commons to the urban. The city here is positioned as the place of everyday life, both in its material and immaterial sense. This definitely triggers the interest of altering architect. Urban commons orient at altering ways of making and governing the city, acting beyond, but not in isolation of, the state and market (Dellenbaugh et al., 2015). As concrete spatial utopia’s, urban commons offer a way to intervene and interrupt the current neoliberal regard to urban production (De Cauter, 2014). The on-going care for and creation of commons offers a way to balance out the domination of Economic Man and his attitude to treat urban livelihoods as commodities (De Angelis, 2010). Discussions on exemplary (architectural) cases of urban commoning such as Bader and Liesgang’s (2014) publication on “*Building the city together*” and Ferguson’s (2014) “*Make\_shift City*” reveal a brimming potential for uAD. There is something in the process of creating and caring for urban commons that reveals an attitude that is going in against the doctrine of Modern Architect. Commoning seems to be the magic word when looking for the mutation of altering Participation Architect. “Commoning architect” it is then?

It might not be that easy. The actual impact of the urban commons in uAD might be felt and discussed; it still needs further experimentation and study. Despite the growing interest in the urban commons, the direct link to the uAD practice so far seems to be still in full exploration. As such it is going to be hard to clearly define a generalization of what commoning architect might be like.

To get a hinge, I will look into three inspirational practices of urban commoning and their underlying attitudes to uAD. In this, I will bring Modern Architect and his generalized masculine characteristics in again to serve as a reference point.

I have selected three on-going urban commons initiatives with the aim to unravel the relationship between the current state of affairs of uAD –for which I aim to create an altering model- and the creation of urban commons in the Western European context.

these cases are selected based on their general and recognition as exemplary urban commons. Furthermore –as architect-researcher- I can relate to these three projects through situated knowledges built up by visiting and living them. Moreover, –as a commoner- I had the pleasure to meet and exchange with some of the key drivers behind these urban interventions. In search of clues on commons-oriented uAD I will discuss (1) the Parckfarm project –with a focus on the Farmtruck- for the Parckdesign Biennale curated by Alive Architecture and Taktyk situated in Brussels, (2) the Prinz-



essinnengärten that has been set up by Nomadisch Grün in Berlin, and (3) the R-Urban –more specifically Agrocité- project by Atelier d'Architecture Autogerée (AAA) in Colombes nearby Paris . These projects respectively entail a kitchen, a garden, and a house.

### **Parckfarm (Farmtruck) / Alive Architecture & Taktyk + asbl Parckfarm T&T**

GOVERNANCE / The project got initiated in the context of the Parckdesign Biennale of 2014. In assignment of the Brussels regional administration Leefmilieu Brussel (Bruxelles Environment) the team of Alive Architecture and Taktyk curated a series of temporary interventions. The curatorial team launched a call that accentuated the need for the proposed projects relate to what “is living” in the surrounding neighborhoods. Through this process, the curators supported local citizens to step in the project's co-creation and shared management. The rather top-down start of the Biennale's design process managed to facilitate a strong civic appropriation, which resulted in several of its interventions to extend beyond the temporary. Today the remaining interventions are taken care of by the nonprofit “Parckfarm T&T” with the support of Leefmilieu Brussels.

SPACE / The project is situated in Brussels at the Tour&Taxis Park (“Thurn en Taxis” in Dutch). This park is located at a post-industrial site, in extension of the park of the actual Tour&Taxis urban development site. The artificial valley used to host railway roads and was labeled as wasteland or interstitial space. The land is governed by Leefmilieu Brussel, a regional administration responsible for the maintenance of this park-to-be. The site is positioned in-between the Molenbeek and Laken neighborhoods.

PROGRAM / Within the Parckdesign Biennale several initiatives were set up to match the goal of the project to experiment a hybrid between an urban farm and a park. The curators launched an open call which resulted in vegetable gardens, the KotKot animal farm, a project about (human) waste, a beehive, the Farmhouse, a landscape table, etc. The project also integrated existing uses or ideas that did not find their way through the official call for interventions. Complementing the at the Tour&Taxis park situated interventions, also a Farmtruck was realized. This truck served as an extension of the multilayered initiatives to reach beyond the park and hosts a kitchen, an workshop space, a cinema screen, a stage and more, which can be set up in public space. The Farmtruck is one of the interventions that are still active beyond the temporary festival. The van is taken care of by an engaged group of citizens in relation with the architect Petra Pferdmenges who has led its realization process. Throughout the design-based participatory action research, the Farmtruck has been intervening a couple of times at Josaphat (see 00.06.fig. 11).

SUPPORT / The Parckfarm project has been initiated and funded by Leefmilieu Brussels and in their assignment curated by the architecture offices of Alive Architecture and Taktyk. Although some of the activities generate income, the project still relays on public funding. The Farmtruck has been financed with the support of Common Grounds and charges a price for its use and animation.

APPRECIATION / Parckfarm has been honored for its substantial investment in citizen participation (BRUZZ, 2015) and has been recognized as a “concrete utopia of an ecological urban commons” (De Cauter, 2014). Contrary to Modern Architect's obsession with positivist logic, the curators approach the public space as being “alive”. Having their interest reaching beyond the built and measurable, the architects looked to start from what is living in the neighborhood. The Farmtruck is a mobile activator more than an

architectural –in the strict sense- object. Not obsessed with predictability, projects and ideas that emerged outside the framework of the open call were still accepted and even encouraged to remain, integrate or further develop. Likewise, the Farmtruck's program is mainly made up based on the enthusiasm and skills of its animators. As an ecological laboratory, Parckfarm and the Farmtruck also experiment circular economy and local entrepreneurship, all highly connected –and thus not independent- to its local context or the places the Farmtruck visits. In this, the interventions do not bypass the diverse and sometimes conflictual reality of its environment.

At the service of the users –not dominating- more than searching for prestige and self-interest, the curator's demanded that locals are set at equal terms with professional architects or artists. Due to this the farm park could become a popular and unpretentious place. The charges asked by the Farmtruck's team for its animation hinders the van's ambition to tour and be at the service of Brussels communities. Though the spatial actions of the Farmtruck together with the overall Parckfarm visualize the solidarity and caring, that is present in the surrounding neighborhoods (Mister Emma, 2014) and with the Farmtruck these dynamics are radiated out further in Brussels. In this way, the project –the Parckfarm and its Farmtruck- prove that altering architectural solutions for urban issues are possible.

REFERENCES /(Alive Architecture; asbl Parckfarm T&T, 2017; BRUZZ, 2015; De Cauter, 2014; Hubo, 2017; Leefmilieu Brussel, 2015; Mister Emma, 2014; Pferdmenes, Kandjee, Cantillon, & Arbe, 2015).

### **Prinzessinnengärten / Nomadisch Grün**

GOVERNANCE / The Prinzessinnengärten got initiated as a guerilla garden in the summer of 2009. The entrepreneurs Robert Shaw and Marco Clausen set up an urban garden with the support of friends, activist, and neighbors. Through a gradual and largely unplanned process, the garden became an exemplary project for urban agriculture based on a strong community. Over a hundred0 of volunteers with a seasonal amount of employees of five to fourteen people have contributed to the creation of this place and its growing political power. As an incremental project, the garden provides space for people to develop their projects based on their focus related to the Prinsezzinnen community. First being tolerated, the garden got granted one-year leases by the public owner of the site. After the risk of being expelled had created a big activist uproar, the garden now has obtained a five-year convention. With this convention running to its end the garden is again under threat of eviction. What initiated as a self-organized civic activist project is today a social business –the Nomadisch Grün company- aiming to finance nonprofit activities and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

SPACE / The Prinzessinnengärten claimed her spot at an abandoned piece of publicly owned land adjacent to the Moritzplatz in the Kreuzberg area. The property of about 6000 square meter –the size of a soccer field- was left bare for half a century but is today increasingly under pressure to be sold for urban development. In 2012 the land, which was initially owned by the Board of Public Property, got transferred to the Borough which allowed more long-term leasing of the site though this seems to be coming to an end soon.

PROGRAM / Apart from a garden that offers a green hide-out in the city, Prinzessinnengärten shows to be a lot more. The site hosts a café, a library, a workshop, a kitchen, and a restaurant. It is an ecological and social business focusing on local food produc-



00.06.fig. 10 – Parckfarm, photographic impression from a site visit, September 2014.

00.06.fig. 11 – The Farmtruck in action at Josaphat for the Incubators kick-off event and Jour Josaph'Aire dag, June 2017.



00.05.fig.12 Prinzessinnengärten, photographic impressions from the site visit, July 2014.

00.06.fig.13 – Agrocité, photographic impression from a site visit, July 2015.

tion that combines this with educational activities, triggering the sharing of knowledge in diverse fields of urban learning. The high engagement of volunteers and participants that render the project viable also turn the garden into a space for/of social and ecological engagement. Moreover, the garden is politicized and provides a platform for debate on the future of the city and the impact of land policies. The garden does also remain a place for leisure and is a social meeting point reaching out to her surrounding neighborhoods and schools. In extension, the Prinzessinnengärten is a location for international exchange and inspiration.

**SUPPORT /** The project initiated from voluntary work and started from a romantic image on gardening. But from its initiation on the activist gardeners have juggled to combine their social ambitions with the goal to be financially sustainable. Producing vegetables and selling them is not sufficiently profitable and thus is the business plan organized around the combined producing, processing and selling of food at the garden. Furthermore, income is generated from educational projects, consulting services, fees for images, presentations and donations or sponsorships. Some people are professionally engaged in the coordination of the garden's activities. The project could benefit from the availability of the site, which at the same time is its weak point. The valuable land is under continuous threat of privatization; the garden is menaced by a forced evacuation.

**APPRECIATION /** The Prinzessinnengärten receives interest from locals, scholars, commoners, ecologists, pedagogues... to such an extent it almost became a plague for Nomadisch Grün. For them, the many requests for interviews and studies have become a demanding distraction from their core business. Apart from the urban agriculture activities and the urban learning program, the project finds its strength due to its symbolic status in questioning conventional urban planning and land policies through concrete action.

To start, Nomadisch Grün plays along Modern Architect's game and is active in spilling quantifiable arguments; the Prinzessinnengärten offers 30000 meals per season and hosted more than 50.000 visitors. The founders consciously claim that most of the value is situated in what cannot be measured.

The gardeners executed a fair share of planning and make business plans, yet an incremental and shared creative process defines the design and realization of the Prinzessinnengärten.

The garden aims to interact with both the vulnerability and the potential of its heterogeneous environment. Nomadisch Grün does not approach their urban commons as independent from its surroundings, and they are furthermore very conscious about dealing with urban resources. On their local scale and within the temporary, the gardeners look for different solutions to deal with challenges that are connected to the city scale and global issues. Nomadisch Grün is linked to international networks such as the European Commons Assembly in which they are one of Common Josaphat's peers in search for the right to the city.

The core program of the garden and their urban struggle illustrates Nomadisch Grün does not see the built as dominating over nature and communities. At the Prinzessinnengärten the green space is defined as a place for active engagement. The garden follows the cyclic rhythm of, and the organization adapts according to it, rather than trying to set it to their hand.

Dealing with the threats of privatization and commodification, the Prinzessinnengärten challenges pure profit driven strategies in urban planning. The work of



Nomadisch Grün extends into a political movement that disconnects urban value from market price. Through action and conversations, the gardeners explicitly engage in the growing debate on urban commons. As entrepreneurship, they prove other economies our possible that stand more in respect to nature, people and the city.

REFERENCES / (Ferguson, 2014; Hosiewulff, 2013; Prinzessinnengarten, 2018).

### **R-Urban (Agrocité) // AAA**

GOVERNANCE / The R-Urban project is initiated by the architects Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou (AAA) in 2011 with the aim to offer a framework for resilient urban regeneration through civic participation. The different units of the R-Urban project -among which the Agrocité- are self-organized and self-managed by residents and local organizations. The project grew from small scale experimental interventions into an incrementally increasing network of complementary hubs. The architects have encouraged broad participation in the running of the facilities and aimed for locals to self-govern the interventions and their activation. R-Urban is strong in its involvement of citizens and local actors, but also organizations, institutions, and professionals at the national and international (European) level take part. Moreover, the political support from the local government turned out to be having a significant impact as R-Urban had to leave their founding ground in Colombes as soon as the municipal politics had changed. Currently, the Agrocité infrastructure is being collectively rebuilt in the neighboring city of Gennevilliers.

SPACE / The R-Urban project shows to be agile and resilient to endure a change of location. Originally the Agrocité unit was set up in Colombes, a suburban neighborhood of Paris. The built structure and related micro-farm were located on a publicly owned urban wasteland, for which today still no development plans are at stake –as far as known. Other units of R-Urban also took advantage of interstitial spaces such as the Recyclab unit that was situated on a closed road. The project was agreed upon for four years and as such found itself in the precarious condition that resulted in its dislocation.

PROGRAM / The R-Urban project is made up of different hubs; the Recyclab is a social enterprise experimenting with recycling and eco-construction and is located in re-used shipping containers. EcoHab was planned to realize cooperative and ecological housing that would be self-built and collectively managed. The third element is Agrocité a micro-farm implementing community gardening, compost-based heating, solar energy production and a physical structure that also facilitates non-material, cultural and social processes related to the overall eco-urbanism project. This physical structure is a catalyst for exchange of knowledge and skills and hosts social enterprises like a café and weekly market. Through all of this, the R-Urban project aims to enable self-governance by citizens.

SUPPORT / Apart from the original support of the local government –which disappeared after a change in municipal politics-, the R-Urban project received help of many other actors. A significant amount of energy and time was invested by the professionals of AAA to launch the project and obtain funding, but also significantly contributed to the coordination and assembling of volunteers. The R-Urban initiative got granted through a Life+ project for which it received European but also regional and local funding. With this founding budget of 1,5 million euros, the goal is to evolve R-Urban toward a completely self-sustaining initiative based on an alternative economy (of re-use and recycling). The financial aid is matched by voluntary work of its community and



through employment of locals.

APPRECIATION / R-Urban and its Agrocité represent another way of doing architecture. The project has been honored for its political innovation (European Prize for Political Innovation), its resilience on many levels, and its on-going experimentation of commoning in the (sub)urban context.

First and foremost the experience at the Agrocité hub in Colombes (visited in July 2015) is one of human encounter and welcoming nature. The project might be strongly presented based on its measurable accomplishments, the emotional and subjective liveliness –strong sense of community- make up its most significant appreciation.

The R-Urban project cleverly takes advantage of interstitial spaces, yet this forces agile responsiveness to change. Something the project showed to overcome after an enduring struggle. Predictability and security do not seem to be fundamental characteristics of this urban commons.

The moving of Agrocité is somehow paradoxical with R-urban's capacity to embed itself in its local neighborhoods. The interventions' location was informed by participatory mapping, illustrative for the ambition of AAA to start from local energies. The architects acknowledge their dependence on the support of eco-civic practices.

R-Urban is conscious about the need to carefully handle commons resources and seek to bring the protection of natural commons in balance with their use. Moreover, AAA has brought out robust urban activism and political emancipation. The struggle to avoid their eviction in Colombes attempted to renegotiate the power relation between civic actors and elected decision-makers. The project through its agency wants to push local governments to shift their role and to work toward public-civic partnership.

Agrocité not only questions urban policies, but it also aims to move away from the extractive and selfish character of contemporary urban development. In alignment to the commons advocacy, there is a strong focus on a regenerative stance to urban production. Furthermore, the planned realization of cooperative housing would have been a pioneer in setting up another way to deal with the need for housing in disconnection from speculative market mechanisms.

REFERENCES / (Atelier d'architecture autogérée, 2010; Ferguson, 2014; Petrescu & Petcou, 2015; Sellé de Chou, 2018)

In his article "*Parckfarm als concrete utopie (volkstuintjes 2.0)*" Lieven De Cauter (2014) connects the Parckfarm urban commons in Brussels to R-Urban hubs of AAA. His enthusiast manifest might easily also entail the work of the Prinzessinnengärten in Berlin. He concludes his favorable review of Parckfarm with the following statement: "*The message is clear: these type of experiments can be reproduced, they could and should be replicated. Connecting Parckfarm with AAA and so many other initiatives illustrate that this is a real paradigm: model project for transition at the level of the neighborhood. The creation of transition parks and neighborhoods that is what we should be doing. Today Parckfarm, tomorrow the whole world!*" (De Cauter, 2014, translation by author).



00.06.fig. 14 – Imagination of the COLab, October 2016.

**‘18 COLab** – imagination by Dag Boutsen & Hanne Van Reusel

Imagined in 2016, COLab initiates from the proliferation of small scale community-initiatives that are grouped under the names of tactical urbanism, DIY architecture, Selfcity, City Makers... On a small scale, they offer concrete and often utopian statements. These initiatives might not always be “architectural”, but they have a physical and socio-spatial impact in the urban context. They are characterized by an open and participatory approach and social-democratic innovative character. Starting from these urban and community-based initiatives, a system-oriented cooperative living lab is imagined. It is a place that offers space to collective governance, civic engagement, co-creation, culture, co-education, etc. COLab is an open laboratory that provides the framework in which diverse facets of (urban) life can find each other. It is a place for co-design -going beyond participation- wherein an iconic architectural way a statement is made.

The meeting with Dag evolves into an engaging conversation that –rather than the interview format- will provide the content for our contribution to “*Participatiegolven*”. Following his analysis of the contemporary practices of self-organized urban interventions, Dag leaps into imagining what the 2018 architectural representation might be. “*What if we could bring together all those small initiatives that we see emerging everywhere in our cities. We could build a sort of laboratory where these projects can evolve into an iconic urban living lab?*”

I cannot help but hear the opening statement of Commons Josaphat (2017) echo through Dag’s reasoning; “*Everywhere in the city people come together to experiment with new ways of community living. (...) We see the connections. We feel the potential. We see how the contours of a new society are being drawn. (...) What if we would think together about how the city can be developed based on these principles?*”

Jumping back and forth between ’68, ’98 and the envisioned ’18, Dag and I see an underlying humane logic underlying the architectural design processes then and now. A logic, for which participation serves as a tool and which is the core attribute for our 2018 imagination. The imagined architectural living lab is a con-glomerate where working and living come together –as in the Zilvervloot-, but also the cultural, economic and –even at the center of it- the democratic need to arise together in one sticky whole. Referring to an interview with urban commons advocate Iaione (2016), we name our imagined architectural icon “COLab”. After all –paraphrasing Iaione- we live in a “*CO-century, the century of the Commons, Collaboration, Cooperation, COmmunity, Communication, CO-design, CO-production, CO-management, Coexistence, CO-living*”.

#### REC.2017.01.09 Proposing Commons in My BackYard // CIMBY

With a couple of actors of Commons Josaphat, we are meeting to work on a research project proposal. We see sufficient potential to continue our civic research that resulted in the collective visioning of Josaphat as a commons neighborhood (Commons Josaphat, 2015b). The proposal for a model building block, the trajectory focusing on health through the quality of space and the self-proclaimed transitional use could combine into civic-academic research with action research take on.

Extract from the application document of the “CIMBY: Commons in my backyard” research proposal:

*“The project initiates from Brussels collectives, organizations and individuals that are already creating urban commons. This collaboration will form the base to develop an integrated model for developing a building block. Through a practice-oriented example, the partners want to underpin how the city can be developed and managed through a collaborative and human-oriented approach. An innovative building block will function as prototype for a neighborhood with a resilient network and a good quality of life.*

*The collaboration of the different partners guarantees a transversal approach at the scale of a building block; development of cooperative housing models, new ways of consumption and production, wellbeing... Together the partners explore suited models of financing, juridical support, governance, maintenance, spatial design, ownership, solidarity organization, etc. All of this is covered by a multifaceted vision of health, which focuses on*

*wellbeing and the quality of life. With this, the non-speculative character –as guarantee for lasting affordability- is put central. Commons Josaphat will be the coordinating partner who watches over the overall coherence, the co-creation between civic initiatives and the public and the involvement of (future) inhabitants.*

*Moreover, the action research will combine with an investment in the temporary use and related social activation of Josaphat. A temporary, moveable construction on the site –the “Maison des Possibles”- serves as meetings place for the community-oriented associations and locals. In this research project, the house could develop into a pilot, the building block to grow toward a shared and collective project. Solidarity, meaningfulness, contact with nature, hands-on experimentation as such transit into a building block “en bien commun”.” (KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture & Commons Josaphat, 2017)*

As Commons Josaphat, we have established a solid vision that has evolved in intriguing trajectories. After years of dedicated volunteered engagement we lack the human energy to pursue. We thus want to explore the possibility of professionalizing our work through a funded research project.

A draft application form is on the table, and we discuss the questions that are still open. How could we bring our three trajectories –îlot modèle, santé and occup’action- together in a for academia required clear-ly framed and highly structured proposal? Commons Josaphat has no legal structure and thus cannot by the coordinating partner. If we move up front an academic partner –being our Department of Architecture, Sint-Lucas Brussels- how can we guarantee to not compromise the shared governance model we practice within Commons Josaphat? Who could be relevant additional academic partners? How can we bring out the richness of our work and develop a concrete and solidly planned project as we are used benefiting from serendipity and manoeuver according to opportunities and threats?

Learning from the Incubators experience, I claim it would be strategic to involve the MSI as a partner in this research project.

Although we all are convinced about the content, the research proposal is fuzzy and setting it up has been a rush. Accordingly, the proposal will not be shortlisted as the jury advised to restructure and bring more focus to mature the application for a second trial next year.

Still today I can feel highly excited about the potential of bringing together the founding work for a commons building block, transitional use and quality of life with academic action research, especially in collaboration with public partners and powerholders. It is close to the COlab envisaged together with Dag.

### 00.06.03 Discussion: In search of a third wave architect

Josaphat's ground (00.03) –as the location of the doctoral research and design practice- is a happening place (00.05.01) that I have claimed to be both symbolic and symptomatic for the state of uAD in Brussels today. To express the matters of concern I see evolving around Josaphat (00.05.03), I have welcomed the caricature of Economic Man and –according to his characteristics- shaped the generalized persona of Modern Architect (00.05.02). Economic Man represents the evils of the commodifying regard on urban livelihoods while Modern Architect endorses a masculine doctrine obsessed with positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance, and self-interest in uAD.

As Josaphat illustrates something is going wrong, it also opens up a promising air. One that breathes the ambition of planning administrations to improve urban planning mechanisms, even though critical voices question their actual sincerity. And more electrifying, Josaphat's air entails commons-oriented visioning in strong relation to house-garden-and-kitchen practices (00.04). Through long term envisioning and concrete action, multiple civic agencies aim to find a way out of the stranglehold of Modern Architect and Economic Man. Josaphat hints for an altering uAD practice.

Josaphat's air invites to look out and start to grasp what is moving today. The doctoral research and design practice embedded in Josaphat's particular identity as a living lab at large might inform a model for contemporary uAD that can balance out Modern Architect. Like Economic Man has to make space for Raworth's communities, acrobats, and sowers and reapers; it might be time for Modern Architect to have some other generalized figures to challenge his persisting dominance. But before I freewheel on the base of the situated knowledges built around Josaphat, I want to acknowledge this search in itself is nothing new (00.06.01). At the outlook for a protagonist that can save us from the evils of Modern Architect, I can lean back on "Participation Architect". In this chapter, I have looked into this caricature with the aim to provide contextualization for what I am fishing at in Josaphat's air. Looking into his upbringing as counter agent and the waves of citizen involvement he thrives of, I claim this persona could use a contemporary update. Something is in motion (00.06.02); participation might find clues in the use of digital tools, in moving away from the strict architectural and/or in a commoning agency.

#### a. We are beyond Participation Architect now

Participation Architect has his roots in the high days of Modern Architect. Fighting him in an oppositional streak, I have formed his identity in contradistinction of his antagonist's generalized masculine characteristics. Participation Architect feels comfortable in the participatory design (PD) scene that seems to share his existential search for what I have named "(be)longing"; his core goal is to improve the quality of life and to foster a democratization process. The field of PD is continuously unfolding (Saad-Sulonen et al., 2015). And as his heimat is shifting, Participation Architect might need to re-evaluate and rethink himself.

PD has always had an interest in technological advancements, and as such today's digital innovations hint for an update of Participation Architect's being. Furthermore,

Participation Architect has to acknowledge design in general and even more strongly for PD is undergoing a shift from the tangible result to the creation of services, experience design and organizational structures (Manzini, 2015a). A spatial agency is manifesting that moves away from the “architectural” obsession with the built (Awan et al., 2013). PD is moving away from its approach anchored in dichotomy and looks for a more transversal and transdisciplinary orientation (Doucet, 2015b; Petrescu, 2005). The goal to reach beyond concertation indicates at degrees of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969), which make the term participation in itself –as it implicates a hierarchy- to become troublesome. It seems the field of urban PD is moving to integrate with the urban commons movement (Eriksen et al., 2016). Participation is but a tool for the underlying search for (be)longing (Van Reusel & Boutsen, forthcoming).

Participation Architect also mingles in with the three waves of citizen involvement in urbanism that Alfredo Mela has demarcated (Mela, 2016, 2018). These waves show to align with turning points in Brussels’ uAD. Starting from the ’69 movement Participation Architect had his high day fighting the fierce Brusselization process (Doucet, 2015c). The ’70’s protest movement entails the first wave of citizen involvement and aligns with the implementation of some participatory measures –consultation- in urban planning; the so-called first turning point in Brussels urbanism as claimed for by Levy (2013). Along these two waves, Participation Architect has created his iconic architectural realizations, though today he is a bit lost. He can feel there is something to be found in the contemporary third wave of civic involvement in urbanism, yet with all those shifts it’s hard to get where he stands now. Many third wave practices reveal a small scale, self-organized and constructive approach (Mela, 2016, 2018; Van Reusel & Boutsen, forthcoming) and several platforms that map the proliferation of such community initiatives also pick up the practices emerging around Josaphat. In this also the urban commons movement comes in, often explicitly linked to this emergence of citizen drive practices that impact on the city. It is time for Participation Architect to evolve and to work toward a potential third turn in Brussels urbanism.

In the exploration of Participation Architect’s contemporary mutation three lines of search have been discussed in this chapter (00.06.02). The first looks into the potential of a digital update. For this, the Incubators of Public Spaces research project and its implementation at Josaphat as urban living lab provide some clues for “Participation Architect 2.0”. Technological advancements such as crowdsourcing and (civic) crowdfunding bare a potential to facilitate the self-organization of citizens –third wave- in setting up micro-interventions in public space. But the underlying governance of a digital platform such as Incubators seems to be the key aspect to guarantee actual democratization in favor of a better qualitative urban environment. The way in which –the how- ideas are proposed, and decisions are made stands central. Like participation, the technology is but a tool to support the search for (be)longing.

The second line of exploration is the “architectural” aspect. Both PD and the spatial agency (Awan et al., 2013) of the third wave increasingly look beyond the built and tangible. However, the notion of the architectural turns out to be strongly penetrated by the doctrine of Modern Architect and Economic Man. Searching how to get away from this uncomfortable association, Participation Architect is interested in contemporary uAD practices that reveal an “altering” (Petrescu, 2007) approach to the discipline (Alkemade et al., 2018, June-November). Participation Architect feels relieved though when he learns that the very existential skills and ways of working of the architect



are not to be discarded. As Petrescu reveals, there is a feminine stance to be found in altering practices. Maybe it is about time to recognize Participation Architect has a differential gender. By her physical alterity from the dominant framework –masculine Modern Architect- she represents another way of perceiving and acting in uAD, one that is reproductive (Petrescu & Trogal (Eds.), 2017). As feminist spatial scholars such as Petrescu (2007) and Schalk et al. (2017) stress; today we need to move beyond too oppositional thinking. Time to think Participation Architect more yin and yang. Feminine and different, yet still an architect. She embodies an architect that still builds albeit in the broader sense of the word. In her contemporary mutation, “no longer Participation Architect” can be her true self. Her architectural practice alters from the one of Modern Architect, but in a heterogeneous spectrum, the one does not overrule the other.

As the third line of search, I have proposed to call in “commoning architect”. After all the urban commons movement has been recurrently addressed when discussing the urban PD scene and the third wave of citizen involvement. Moreover, Josaphat in her symbolic constellation hosts a commons lab where commons-oriented visions and practices find ground. And to add on, the notion of commoning –rather than com-mons- echoes the shift away from the physical and built as the core business of the uAD practice. As stressed earlier in this written account (00.04.01) commoning acknowledges the work it demands to create, but also to govern and take care of urban commons (P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017). Concerning the discussion on the urban commons movement, Participation Architect might find some relevant alliances.

The commons discourse resonates with one of Participation Architect’s core ambitions; looking for democratization. Urban commons entail practices that have a political tone –often allied with urban activism- and focus on the decision-making processes embedded in urban (re)development. Urban com-mons assume community’s self-organization and a shared governance model. This movement as such is more interested in seeking public-civic collaborations than working from institutions. This allows Participation Architect to shake off the uncomfortable position from within a top-down approach to participation as he has experienced so throughout Mela’s second wave. Furthermore urban commons move urban resources out of market mechanisms and as such combine with an anti-commodification stance.

Commoning architect seems to be the *deus ex machina*. However, a direct link between commoning and the practice of uAD is still in full exploration. Urban commons are practiced and discussed in the field of architecture, yet no clear-cut understanding is provided. To hinge for some clues, I have brought up three exemplary cases of urban commons for which I stressed the projects that come in the form of a house, garden, and a kitchen. I have briefly discussed these urban commons and their agency and the generalized characteristics of Modern Architect in which they show to move away from his masculine stance to uAD. Apart from bringing hope and inspiration these cases support my argument that an exciting potential for an altering uAD practice is to be found in the urban commons movement.

## b. Commoning architect stands at the outlook

Looking into the figure of Participation Architect it became clear this caricature could benefit an update that deals with PD and its relation to technological advancements as

tools in search of (be)longing. Participation Architect's contemporary mutation embraces an altering stance to the "architectural", moving beyond the built and the object. Taking on a more transversal and transdisciplinary position, I have claimed no-longer-Participation Architect feels comfortable in a feminine/feminist movement that revalues the reproductive work in uAD. To conclude, the model of a commoning architect has come to the stage as the ideal model that brings together a hunger for democratization and opposition to commodification. The relation between the (urban) commons and uAD is still in full exploration –also at Josaphat.

To gain some clues, I have looked into three exemplary practices of urban commoning that I would like to discuss in relation to Josaphat. Some relevant similarities and differences can be found. To start the Parckfarm project, R-Urban and the Prinzessinnengärten all three explicitly are related to the urban commons movement, as is the case for Josaphat. Furthermore, they share ways of working that challenge Modern Architect's generalized characteristics which embody matters of concern at stake in contemporary uAD.

As first aspect the Parckfarm kitchen, R-Urban's house and the garden of Prinzessinnengärten practice an approach that moves away from a positivist logic that favors a technical, objective and rational approach in which the architect is the technical authority and where functionalist splintering creates barriers. The architects of Alive Architecture and Taktyk look for the expertise of locals and focus on the cultural layer –aliveness- of spatial interventions. Nomadisch Grün mainly values their results that cannot be easily measured and AAA prioritizes experiences of human encounter and a welcoming nature for their projects. Similar Recup'Kitchen (RK) evolved from spontaneous ideas into a project through a process of learning by doing that is highly based on the energies and emotions of the involved volunteers. Jardin Latinis (JL) more than being a garden, aims to support social cohesion and relates to the adjacent neighborhoods of Josaphat. The Maison des Possibles (MdP) then aligns with the Agrocité's ambition to build a structure to host the local communities while manifesting another way of building through its realization.

The second element is predictability, oriented at control and efficiency and thus limiting participation in a clearly defined and constraining framework. Such a stance is significantly weakened in the exemplary urban commons where the curators of Parckfarm welcomed ideas that had emerged outside the given frame. Prinzessinnengärten has been created through an incremental and shared process, and R-Urban has proven its agile responsiveness in reaction to their forced eviction. All three urban commons benefit from the input of people for their continuation; the projects are made possible due to the support and shared engagement of citizens that as such define the projects' governance and stewardship. Likewise, people's essential contributions define RK. JL echoes the Prinzessinnengärten's incremental and collective creation process concerning the unstable nature of a human-ecological environment. The team behind the MdP chose to merge their projects with a shared interest resulting in a more unstable and arbitrary co-creation process. In this, the agents figure out their limits and common denominator along the evolution of the construction of the house.

Third, an independent attitude is countered. All exemplar commons aim a strong connection with its environment. The complexity and vulnerability of diverse neighborhoods are not avoided, but in contrast, approached as a potential for active engagement. In addition, also nature and the limits of resources are strongly taken into account. RK

follows this approach and acknowledges its dependence on donations –both monetary and food leftovers- and volunteering energy. Similarly, the MdP thrives of human energy and recuperated materials as well as it follows the changing dynamics of the relation between the civic agents and public owner. JL then counters the idea of independence by investing in the relationship with locals and through following the rhythm and whims of the seasons.

The fourth characteristic of Modern Architect, his dominance and imposed hierarchy are challenged in urban commoning. People and their quality of life are placed at the core. Parckfarm aims at solidarity and caring to make urban space alive, while the Prinzessinnengärten and R-Urban have pushed for political emancipation and both experience the direct threat of eviction due to land speculation and the arbitrariness of political decision-making. Likewise, nature is not perceived to be at the service of architecture and urban development. Green space is defined as a place for active engagement –Prinzessinnengärten- and natural commons stands in a balanced relation with human use of space. For RK the right to use public space is put up front, manifesting a different more dynamic use is possible. JL takes up a humble position, and its gardeners put the surrounding nature and its biodiversity up front, not at least manifested through their dedication to take care of Josaphat's lake. The MdP then finds its identity as a shelter in service of the communities that grow at Josaphat's ground.

To conclude the fifth element of self-interest addresses a desire to quickly show off successful results and approach the urban environment as a financial investment. In contrast, the urban commons at Tour & Taxis, Moritzplatz, and Colombes (and now Gennevilliers) challenge the profit-oriented approach to urban development and its commodification process. Generative practices are put up front, and social cohesion and care-taking are visualized and represented rather than aiming at spectacular results. RK's agency in public space addresses this place can be a place for meeting, more than seeing users as mere consumers. Reciprocity and engaging people in care-taking are prioritized over the physical impact of the intervention. The gardeners of JL work with reused materials for their interventions and approach food production as a generative activity of which the collect is mainly shared. Together with the naturalists, the gardeners at Josaphat are most directly opposed to the urbanization of one of Brussels last land reserves. Here again, the house at Josaphat can relate to the Agrocité structure as an incubator for commoning. As a building block for the neighborhood to come, the MdP is mainly generative towards Josaphat's urban activists and visualized their discourse of shared governance and stewardship, albeit it not without the necessary tensions that come with this. In its identity as "Huis van de Commons", the MdP also manifests Common Josaphat's critical stance towards the commodification of Brussels urban environment.

Josaph'Aire then as facilitating structure for the communities at Josaphat and their commons-oriented interventions, brings together a similar attitude that challenges the masculine approach embodied by the caricature of Modern Architect. The founding of JA is marked by a strategic choice within a more complex public-civic negotiation process, as such the nonprofit is –after its creation rather than beforehand- still in search of its definition. Moreover, it is finding itself in a highly unstable position as its future and planned agency is entirely dependent on an evolving group of communities and their relation to the MSI. In its creation, JA has come to life with the primary purpose to serve the commons-oriented communities at Josaphat and to facilitate their (tran-

sitional) future. In the negotiations for a convention, JA represents the urban activist's desire to obtain an equal position. And as soon as the agents on the field decide to break up the dialogue with those in power, JA will follow their decision and unbind itself. To conclude, at its core objective JA is there to support the generative experimentations embedded in the micro-interventions at Josaphat. Taking on a constructive approach – so far- the ambition is cherished to manifest and put up front the commoning within the self-proclaimed transitional uses.

It is clear that the three exemplary practices of urban commoning and the commons practices at Josaphat relate over a similar attitude to uAD, which alters significantly from the as problematic considered doctrine of Modern Architect and his friend Economic Man. Though there also are significant differences between the discussed urban commons and what is at play at Josaphat.

First, there is the scale of the sites; Josaphat seems to be quite particular due to its significant surface. Consisting of 25ha of unbuilt land, she by far bypasses the already significant surfaces of Parckfarm, the Prinz-essinnengärten, and the realized R-Urban interventions. Although all of these inspirational commons do connect their on-site interventions to the broader city scale, Josaphat with her plans consisting of 1600 housing units embodies an entirely new district. Its urban commons allow relating their micro-interventions to the regional level in which urban agriculture, mobility, housing organization, water management, public space, urban governance, energy production, industry, and the like combine. In follow up, due to this condition of Josaphat the work of Commons Josaphat with its holistic and at the same time concrete proposals stands unique as third wave practice.

As a second differentiating element, Josaphat is characterized by a plurality of micro-interventions that are developed by different yet related communities that self-organize. Although each of the three renowned urban commons is defined by strong shared governance and a broad community of engaged citizens that take up responsibility and care, they all have been initiated by a leading duo. Not taking any dominating leadership these drivers do mark their agency and guide the incremental growth of their projects as well as they seek to empower and facilitate shared decision-making. Josaphat, on the other hand, is claimed by several communities, which each have their leading figures. The informality –not legally recognized use- makes that everybody and at the same time nobody is in charge. Often the own legitimacy of key drivers is questioned by others at the field and not at least by themselves. This both brings opportunities to foster biodiversity of civic agents but also has led to numerous frustrations and conflicts. Josaph'Aire as shared structure might offer a chance to work towards a more clear shared governance model in which the numerous collectives could find a partnership. Though it seems too soon and the situation is too fragile to tell if this could happen.

As a third element, Josaphat distinguishes herself by her status of space awaiting her planned future. Where the three discussed examples of urban commons are located at urban sites that are temporarily available, none of them –at the beginning- had concrete urban development plans hanging above their head. In contrary Commons Josaphat's (CJ) had chosen Josaphat as the site of interest precisely because of its label as an area of regional interest that is to be developed. This resulted in constructive activism towards the plans at hand; the collective does not contest the development, yet claims the way in which (how) this city making happens could / should be different. CJ's constructive position colors the agencies at Josaphat. Although the actual need to build on this open

terrain is increasingly questioned, the civic agencies at Josaphat mark a shift away from the counter projects that long have been the tool for urban activists in Brussels. Both R-Urban and Prinzessinnengärten have taken stronger positions opposing the destination of their land as parking space or property to sell for urban development. Josaphat's ground in contradiction welcomes a more fuzzy and unorganized community of commoners that represents diverse and sometimes opposing opinions. At the same time, she also forms the base for a more nuanced and potentially collaborative approach towards the public actors in charge of her future development.

As fourth difference, the urban commoning at Josaphat is still in an early phase. Not (yet) being formally recognized, not having a business plan or a research project or planning administration to back them up, the micro-interventions at Josaphat still need to significantly mature. Like its somewhat unorganized shared decision-making, this less planned and supported condition forms both a strength and weakness.

Josaphat's agency has a huge potential. Josaphat's air breaths an electrifying potential for an altering urban development at an unseen scale. One that could be more yin and yang even; blending in some of –masculine- Modern Architect in an altering –feminine- approach such as is proposed by CJ's conception of a commons building block. Where we stand today, the self-proclaimed transitional uses might be evicted soon –depending on how the on-going negotiations continue- and by 2020 the first piece of land will be handed over to a private promotor that approaches Josaphat's ground as a financial investment.

Josaphat's might provide a foundation on which to build a generalized model of a commoning architect, yet at the moment her ground is too unstable. Compared to the three exemplary urban commons, Josaphat still needs to mature, and her richness in hosting multiple communities still has to prove itself in the long run. As I feel thrilled about Josaphat's potential, I see the cracks in what is but the first building block of a commons neighborhood.

The house-garden-and-kitchen architecture including the practice embedded in Josaph'Aire certainly fit in the urban commons movement, and I am convinced the situated knowledges built at Josaphat can contribute to the conversation on urban commons and their relation to uAD, especially for Brussels. Soaked in Josaphat's everyday reality and puzzled about its uncertain future, I humbly create a model tailored at Josaphat's size. Let me present to you "Commons Architect.e".

### c. Josaphat welcomes "Commons Architect.e"

In the previous chapter 00.05 "A field of tension" I claim Josaphat's ground is both symbolic for the future of Brussels as well as symptomatic for the frictions that come with her planned development. The caricature of Modern Architect and his obsession with positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance and self-interest have helped me to unravel some of the matters of concern evolving around Josaphat. At the same time, I position the founding work of Commons Josaphat, the agency of the house-garden-and-kitchen projects and their support through Josaph'Aire as relevant markers for an altering approach to uAD. One that is commons-oriented and resonates with a broader scene of urban activism, which cleverly takes over temporarily available places in Brussels. As a happening place, Josaphat offers a fertile breeding ground to

explore the potential and meaning of commons-oriented uAD interventions. With the proposal for Josaphat as a neighborhood “en bien commun” and the micro-interventions for the self-proclaimed for transitional use, civic communities have planted seeds at her soil.

The doctoral research and design practice aim to contribute to an altering uAD practice which is unfolding at Josaphat’s ground. In parallel through this design-based participatory action research, I strive to grasp what is moving in her promising air. Within her particular context embedded in the Brussels Capital Region Josaphat’s situation might provide clues for an altering model for contemporary uAD. In this, Josaphat’s ground is embedded in Brussels’ challenging yet stimulating context characterized by her complex and fragmented government constellation and history of Brusselization and urban activism. Through the figure of Participation Architect and his entanglement with Mela’s (2016, 2018) three waves of citizen participation in urbanism, I have in this chapter provided a contextualization for what I see to be happening at Josaphat. Brussels uAD history from ’68 onwards (Doucet, 2015c) has encountered turning points that mark a step forward in the democratization of planning processes. The first –situated around the ’70s– is recognized by Levy (2013) and has established consultation processes to become obliged in urban planning procedures. The second I have brought up to occur around the ’90s in parallel with Mela’s second wave. I point at the implementation of the Neighborhood Contracts as demarking a reform in planning mechanisms that move from consultation to concertation and potentially also –very organized– co-creation. There is a tendency to climb up Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation, that – from an optimistic stance– could continue into a potential third turn opening up to partnership and other degrees of citizen power.

Arguments can be found in Moritz (2009) his hypothesis for another turning point in Brussels urban-ism. The exemplary cases he brings up in his 2009 speech, today have not fully lived up the promises they had bared within. Another clue can be Mela’s acknowledgment of the third wave of citizen involvement in urban planning today, with Josaphat’s community initiatives as a regularly addressed case in several map-pings of civic self-organization taking place today. Could also the third wave resonate with a third turning point as is happening in Turin with the implementation of the “Regulation for the care and regeneration of urban commons”? Not coincidentally these third wave practices in Brussels flirt or already profoundly engage with the urban commons movement. Moreover, in the previous chapter (00.05.03) I have acknowledged a new generation of urban activism is taking place in the practices that creatively use temporarily available places in Brussels. Being in Josaphat’s air, I cannot shake off the idea a momentum is building.

The current reorganization of planning tools tempers the optimism for a hypothetical third turn in Brussels urbanism. The present tendencies marked in the adaptation of planning mechanisms such as the CoBAT and its RPA orient to an opposite direction when it comes to facilitating citizen involvement (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017; ARAU, IEB, BRAL, et al., 2017). It is still too early to claim the commons-oriented and third wave practices in Brussels (will) have a lasting impact on Brussels’ urban planning procedures.

But some things are in motion, Josaphat’s air is charged with instigating electricity. The third wave movement in which she is embedded pushes for a more constructive attitude from the grassroots. Standing up as equal agents citizen groups demand true civic-pub-



lic partnership, delegated power, and even citizen control; going all the way up on Arnstein's ladder (1969). The ambition is set, and in Brussels, Josaphat finds identity as symbolic ground in this undertaking.

At the lookout for a protagonist to support my quest for an altering uAD practice at Josaphat, I have claimed in the previous section that commoning architect might be a promising candidate. She could be the contemporary –third wave- mutation of our old-school hero Participation Architect. Standing at Josaphat's ground, I believe it is too early and too ambitious to create a generalized personality for commoning architect just from my / our situated knowledges. Although Josaphat has claimed its spot in the broader urban commons scene, I feel more comfortable to remain at Josaphat's familiar ground and its relevant position in Brussels uAD.

So it is from Josaphat's ground I will clay an altering model for uAD. One that is still young and for sure needs to mature. One that takes on her quest for (be)longing in an everyday –commons- struggle. One that unheroically can stand up to Modern Architect, a persona who can embody a contemporary mutation of Participation Architect. A caricature that can represent what is forming in Josaphat's air and from which I cherish the vain hope she can empower Brussels third wave practices through her architectural agency. In my optimistic aspirations, this model could be at the lead in the struggle to mark a third turning point for Brussels. Starting from Josaphat, this protagonist does not stand alone but receives the support of numerous urban activist that envision and pilot ways to tackle the matters of concern in contemporary uAD. Let me introduce you to "Commons Architect.e" as she stands with her feet in Josaphat's muddy ground.

She is still searching her way, hesitating, yet she is ambitious. Driven by a (be)longing, she envisages that commons neighborhood, that hypothetical third turning point, and an altering uAD practice.

Eager to learn from her peers, she looks at Participation Architect with admiration, yet not without a critical eye. She approaches participatory design as a relevant tool and follows the unfoldings of this field. She sees the utility of technological advancements but does not let it overrule her core ambitions. In the search to improve the quality of life in the urban space and to support democratization she enthusiastically dives into the network of third wave practices. She feels to be part of Brussels new generation in urban activism playing with the abundance of temporarily available space. She is inspired by the altering architectural practices that look beyond the built and which nudge architects to act more transversal and transdisciplinary. She highly values reproductive work and in this does not hide her feminist stance.

She struggles with Economic Man and Modern Architect's attitude and regularly gets disappointed by their still lasting dominance. She acknowledges she has been educated by Modern Architect and still has much to learn from his approach. But she does not want to be like him and repeat what she feels are his mistakes. She sees herself as a commoner and as such finds herself along with many inspiring peers at the field. She tries and by doing she is learning. She hopes that one day she might mature to that "commoning" stage.

She is an "architect.e", flirting with the Dutch "architecte"; the feminine word for an architect. Likewise, this spelling winks at the French way to address male and female, singular and plural as "tou.te.s". Her nomination is an incorrect and not existing English term. She might have a different professional background and thus not be an official

architect. In her improvised multilingualism, the architect.e is hard-core Brussels and not constrained by nationality or culture. She is feminine, but can also be male and possibly plural. She is an architect but altering.

The Commons Architect.e can be found in the anthropologist working for BRAL who takes a leading role in facilitating the Josaphat communities and who supports their urban activism to envisage the future of Brussels starting from what is there. I can recognize her in the Moroccan father that helps to build the Re-cup'Kitchen roulotte, and whom with his gentle hospital nature supports her activation at Josaphat. It might be the gardener-herbalist who had initiated a project at Josaphat to find a way to relate to nature, but who turned delirious as he could not see his place of belonging in our contemporary society. Commons Architect.e has many faces. But I will identify her according to my profile, based on my situated knowledges and embodying my vain aspirations to represent an altering model for uAD. Taking note that by putting myself central, I reveal the Modern Architect embedded in me. In this form, commoning architect.e is a young and ambitious woman, a Flemish in Brussels, a naïve intellectual educated in the field of uAD, and an engaged urban activist.

Inspired by Raworth's (2017) proposal to introduce multiple altering models for Economic Man, I would like to demonstrate that Modern Architect is not to be replaced, and not certainly by just one altering model. I would like you to see the Commons Architect.e as but one out of a series of alternatives to Modern Architect.



00.06.fig. 15 – Josaphat, August 2016. Photo by Paula Bouffioux.

# 00.07

emergent themes

## THE COMMONS ARCHITECT.E

*There are other structures hidden under the reality.*

*Like in painting.*

*If you transform the canvas, another image appears.*

*(... )*

*I am looking for a way of living.*

- Quote from Leonora Carrington, Poniatowska (2015)

In the previous chapter 00.06 “A turning point?” I have looked for a contemporary evolution of “Participation Architect”. In follow up I will here discuss my newly created persona; the “Commons Architect.e”. She is founded on the house-garden-and-kitchen uAD interventions at Josaphat in the collision with their underlying commoning (00.04) that I all together have labeled “commons architecture”. She will stand as a model in search to alter the dominant position of Modern Architect who I have discussed to embody several matters of concerns that are emerging around Josaphat (00.05). Matters of concern for which I have claimed Josaphat’s ground is both symptomatic and symbolic, and as such illustrates what is going wrong in contemporary uAD, more particularly in Brussels.

Taking Josaphat as the ground of this doctoral research and design practice, I will accordingly clay my model from the situated knowledges built up throughout its design-based participatory action research. And although I would like to demonstrate that Commons Architect.e – “Arch.e” for the friends- can carry many faces and is made up out diverse and altering identities, I will shape her according to my experience and agency at Josaphat. As such, the Arch.e will support me to grasp at what I feel to be simmering in Josaphat’s air.

Searching for how to define the Arch.e, I can lean back on the situated knowledges built up through the design-based participatory action research on and around Josaphat’s ground (00.03). The designerly ways of knowing and embodied experiences that make up these knowledges have been captured in the architectural notebooks. It is coding these auto-ethnographic notes that has revealed the urgency of the question considering my architectural agency, as well as it has supported me find some clues. Looking for what defines the commons architectural agency I went through the lists of codes again and again. The result is a series of patterns that reveal the what (00.07.01), how (00.07.02) and where and when (00.07.03) of commons architecture, and a list of adjectives that could all together reveal the architectural attitude and way of working at Josaphat (00.07.04).

The insights that are discussed in this chapter have emerged through the iterative coding of the auto-ethnographic logbook notes. This process has supported the explicit making of the knowledges, learnings, questions, positioning, methods and design strategies of what I in this dissertation bring together as commons architecture. Each of these patterns that will be discussed can be retraced to lived experiences (REC) within several of the narrated uAD practices at Josaphat (00.04). The discussion on these patterns will bring up studied literature, inspirational concepts and earlier published findings to describe the what, how, where and when that makes up Josaphat’s architectural agency. This literature, concepts, and findings in combination with the REC’s have merge theory and practice.

## 00.07.01 What identifies the commons uAD practice

In this section, I will highlight four patterns that identify the commons uAD practice. The first concerns (a) the media of imaginations that is situated at the crossing of the image and the imagination. The second aspect (b) entails the performative nature of the micro-interventions; the way in which they act and change reality through their manifestation. The third concerns (c) the pattern of the lebendige; it acknowledges the value to be found in the simplicity and essentiality of the everyday. The fourth and final then (d) discusses the aesthetics, looking both at the formal as well as the experiential layer of this aspect.

### a. Its imaginations

Commons uAD –like maybe design in general- starts from an imagination; in Dutch “verbeelding”. It entails a projection and visualization of what could be. It is situated at the crossing of the image and the imagination. Putting ideas/aspirations/relational values/dreams/a belief/imaginations into an image has recurrently turned out to be an important, if not indispensable tool to set up an altering uAD intervention. It has naturally been the pilot act (see 00.07.fig.1) from which I started the design-based participatory action research, and it has been stubbornly coming back as a design strategy in all the projects I actively took part in or which I had followed with a curious eye.

I have discussed the notion of imagination / “verbeelding” in the midterm report of the doctorate in the format of a letter addressed at “our fellow-dreamers” :

It all starts with an idea, a dream, a belief.  
VERBEELDING; an image, imagination, imaging.

These are grounded in our desires, our needs.  
They are based on what we value.  
They bring out what we see could be possible.

An illustration of a concept has a power. By starting to give ideas shape, you can see its possibilities. These imaginations work in such a way they are still open.

It comes in the form of a sketch. It is an assemblage of ideas and aspirations we picked up. It is significantly undefined. It functions as an invitation to appropriate it and to make it your own.

You can see the possibilities; you do not see the limits. Not yet, at least.

These imaginations come in different forms; often sketches, illustrations, collages, etc.  
They combine handwork with digital media. It usually starts in the notebook of the architect. At least the image begins there. The ideas and dreams that are incorporated or will be incorporated have been floating around already for a while. Wandering.





00.07.fig. 1 – The “BAZAAR festival” imagination, exhibited at the We-Trades exhibition, February 2015.



April '15  
'verbeelding' for la bord de l'eau / 1997



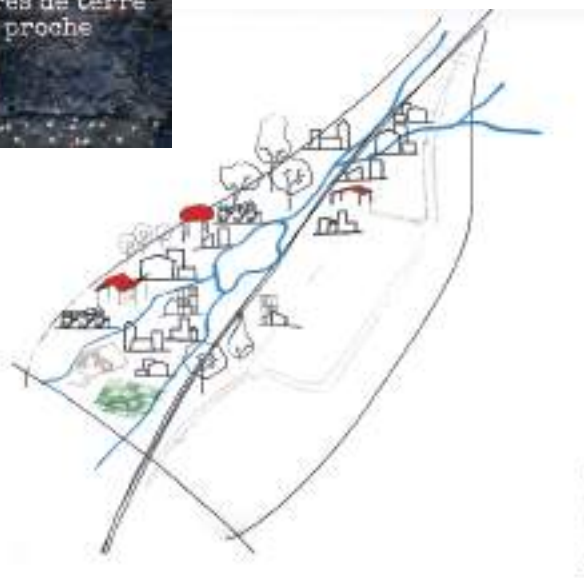
March '16  
Event 'cup of ideas' by the students of the elective course  
'the spatial mirror'. Image by Marisa Boraba.



00.07.fig. 2 – Two of the polaroid images that are added to the letter to “our fellow-dreamers”, February 2017.

00.07.fig. 3 – Imaging RK from April 2015 to March 2016.

00.07.fig. 4 – Imagination and realization of RK, November 2015 and April 2016.



00.07.fig. 5 – Video still from the “Potager spontané” reportage by Dewey asbl (2015), March 2015.

00.07.fig. 6 – Visualization of the by CJ proposed transformation of Josaphat into a commons neighborhood, May 2015.

00.07.fig. 7 – Hand-drawn map of Josaphat, the tool to image / imagine her future, May 2018.



00.07.fig. 8 – Rendering of the planned Josaphat district. Image by MS-a retrieved from [josaphat.brussels](http://josaphat.brussels).

This imagination pattern also relates to the speculative aspect of research by design (Borret, 2016; Johan Verbeke, 2013) as discussed in section 00.03.03.a. Moreover, it connects to utopian thinking in combined design practice and research, which emphasizes the ability of critical design practice to question society and her way of dealing with the spatial organization (Janssens & Heynen, 2013). The utopian thinking, by challenging our approach to reality, undermines the “there is no alternative” discourse (Janssens, 2008) as the BCR implements it to motivate the way of dealing with making the city in Brussels. Imaginations as a tool in a commons uAD practice help to see –altering– possibilities and reflect urban desires and aspirations. It also supports a critical reflection on the current condition of uAD and the matters of concerns at stake.

The role such imaginations play is apparent in the story of the Recup’Kitchen proposal for the Creativity call for Brussels. The moment RK gained its name, but more importantly the first moment that our wandering ideas, wild spoken imaginations and dreamingly conversations about a kitchen project at Josaphat gained body.

Although the sketches were made quickly –the deadline for applying the call was only a few days away–, they capture a more lengthy process of dreaming, discussing and exchanging (see 00.04.fig. 5). More importantly through tracing RK’s imagining on paper for the first time, the project anchored in a long term vision. The illustration of the kitchen –at that time envisioned to be installed in a maritime container– pictured how the project would function in the present (2015), a couple of years later when the Josaphat development was supposed to initiate (2018) and on a longer term (2020) when it would be integrated in the new district.

Moreover, the style of the imagination is deliberately simple to express an idea not a rendering of a wholly designed project. It blends hand-drawn work with digital editing, in which the accidental shifting of the alignments between the pencil line drawing and Photoshop coloring, become a qualitative contribution. The picture is not finished, a bit messy and most importantly open. As a project, it is not designed into detail but opens for others to pick up on it and appropriate it. The imagination is accessible and allows for others to the potential of the main idea in line with their interests, so they can slowly make it their own and adapt it according to their aspirations; as has happened through the scouting and constructing of RK.

Although the illustration imaging the RK concept might be hasty and sketchy, its layered existence has some detail to it. The container is positioned in connection to the existing dozen of plant boxes of the just initiated Jardin Latinis. The conceptualization of RK is entangled with this emerging garden and its concerns about food sustainability. The illustrations are based on the simplicity of the material of the recuperated plant boxes and as such echo its particular aesthetics the aesthetics while in the background a photo of the site is integrated. RK today is situated nearby the location imagined for it at during its early design stage in May 2015. The details in the 2015 imagination are derived from an actively lived position at Josaphat’s ground.

Recup’Kitchen’s imagination process, both in its content as in its illustrations, changes over time. At the crowdfunding stage (November 2015) the kitchen is imagined to be realized in a caravan so it would be mobile and able to travel to other public places in Brussels. In the end, as we obtained the necessary funding, we bought a circus wagon; “roulotte” (see 00.07.fig. 4). The sketchy drawing style leaves sufficient space for such shifts in the collective realization process and smoothly permitted for the image representing RK to adapt according to the actual physical appearance of the kitchen. Sill



today the hand-drawn style and collage technique remain strongly present in the graphical representation of RK. And although the project definition has gone through significant, yet not existential modifications; the non-finished looking imaginary allowed to maintain a coherence in the project's conceptualization. This allows the core team of RK to imagine further different forms of continuation; such as the idea to have a mobile bike kitchen.

A similar imagining process is exemplified by the conceptualization and realization of the Jardin Latinis. There, in the first imaging of the idea a communicative and playful video –made by Mathieu- invites people to join (see 00.07.fig. 5) The imagination films the staged birth of a garden; a recuperated wooden crate transforms into a plant box. Here the style of narrating and illustrating is clearly created by another hand.

In this other form of imagining I do recognize a similar eye for detail, an openness, a sketchy style, and a visionary underlay. The location of the plant box's arrival –being Josaphat's southwest corner- is not coincidental and can lean on Mathieu's strong lived knowledge –as local inhabitant- of the Josaphat area. Likewise, the image of a seed that is being planted symbolically fits the garden's aspired agency to not only grow vegetables but also foster community building. As such, this imagination can be read as manifesting the envisaged relational values this collective garden could / would build. Multiple elements illustrate the in the imagination embedded aspirations for the garden-in-becoming; the used materials such as recuperated wood crates can be seen to represent the JL's ambition to foster the reuse of material resources. Moreover, the open invitation looking for social bonds is already strongly expressed in this video reportage. The film with its playful background music triggers enthusiasm and inspires others –among which me- to imagine their action for Josaphat and beyond.

The importance of imaginations can also be retraced in the tension surrounding the visualization of the official development plans for Josaphat (see 00.03.fig. 6 and 00.05.fig. 10) and the illustrations I had made to visualize the by Commons Josaphat proposed transformation process (see 00.07.fig. 6). A similar contrast with the style of the formal plans can be found in hand drawn top-down map that lies on the table of the Maison des Possibles (see 00.07.fig. 7).

The last is an open invitation for local agents and visitors to project their ideas and aspirations on this drawing that provides a birds-eye perspective on Josaphat's terrain. The base of this image –open for imaging- has been made by my hand and identifies the same basic sketch style that can be found in the RK images. On top of it, pencil traces and markers have left marks of other agents and as such represent their appropriation. Representing Josaphat as an open white space to be filled in with the own imagination, the map's location at Josaphat nudges to take into account her consistency as natural environment. Through the strategic combination of –white page- openness and an anchored position, this imagination is implemented as a tool to foster the on-going dialogue that takes place in and around Josaphat's Maison.

This stands in contrast with the renderings made to picture Josaphat's planned development (see 00.03.fig. 6 and 00.05.fig. 10). Although the plans are only at the stage of a strategic and schematic masterplan, these images show a finished and realistic image of Josaphat's envisioned district. The renderings show a green environment with white cubic housing, no streets with cars, but people who are doing sports or enjoy a picnic at the park as birds fly over (see 00.07.fig. 8).

The houses are –like their schematic representation in the plans- greyish and consist of



generic cubes with an abundance of greenery around. Apart from this image to be experienced as manipulative by the Comité de Site Josaphat (2017a), I have noticed these images give the impression everything is already fixed, and no space is left for participation in the planning and realization process. If we may believe the MSI (Perspective, 2018a), this is not the case. Nevertheless, the plans flawless renderings and as finished appearing plans occur as provocative to the local inhabitants and agents; for them, these imaginations are a showcase of the pharaonic nature of the project.

I can recognize similar frictions in the architectural presentation drawings as performed by my caricature Modern Architect, and more specifically his contemporary renderings. They aim to give a precise –predictable– image of what the future can look like. Often when these images are presented, the design of the project is already finished; there is not much space anymore to incorporate feedback, let be that it would be encouraged. In general architectural drawings for project presentations –as we know them from Modern Architect– are implemented as a tool to impress, show off and sell. In contrast, the commons imaginations combine hand-drawn images and collage techniques, which make the conceptualization of the presented projects remains open for others to interact, appropriate and adapt them. The sketchy style and its unfinished nature show openness to ideas as well as constructive criticism and allow for potential participants to connect to the proposed project and appropriate it. Based on the situated knowledges built at Josaphat's ground, I claim that with an altering practice of uAD comes an altering imagining that reflects the open and participatory nature as well as the messiness and amount of detail involved. I believe it remains crucial to engage in long term visioning to truly value the potential of the imagination for the commons architectural practice.

The necessity to sell and show off an idea is also firmly embedded in the commons-oriented imaginations. Whether or not it is the goal to involve new agents, gain votes for a call for ideas or to obtain funding through crowdfunding or subsidies, in both Modern Architect's and Commons Architect.e's practice, the imagination shows to have an outgoing ambition to communicate, promote and convince.

## b. Its performative nature

Another facet that is strongly present in all projects evolving around Josaphat is their performative nature. As a recurring pattern, each initiative, through their micro-intervention or visionary claim, expresses and gives form to a set of aspired relational values. All of them –each in their way– aim to make a statement and show that other possible ways of doing are possible in the (re)production of the city.

The notion of the “performative” originates from linguistic philosophy where the distinction between “performance” and “performative” has been established by John L. Austin (2013). The Merriam Webster dictionary (2018) defines “performative” as *“being or relating to an expression that serves to effect a transaction or that constitutes the performance of the specified act by virtue of its utterance”*. Accordingly, in the introduction of the book “Performative Urbanism” (Wolfrum & Brandis, 2015), Sophie Wolfrum (2015b) recognizes in the performative an action of articulation that in itself generates a new reality, which she connects to architecture. Performative architecture relates to an urban scale and entails situation, utilization, process, and interaction. In this reading,

architecture is understood “far beyond object and image” (Wolfrum, 2015a, p. 5). A perspective that resonates with Commons Architect.e’s ambition to embody an altering stance to the architectural (as discussed in section 00.06.05.b).

Within the discussion on performative urbanism, Valentina Signore’s (2014) contribution “Who Said ‘Per-formative’? Towards a Critical Posture” emphasizes the openness of the performative. Signora (2014, p. 171) claims that it is inherent to the performative practice to envisage spaces “that are designed to be open to change: the design itself seeks to welcome and encourage transformations subsequent to its own decisions, definitions, and limitations”. In her reflection, Signore addresses some specific aspect of the performative project.

- ° Open form; this is distinctive to modernity requiring imprecision, ambiguity, uncertainty, and incompleteness.
- ° The user as a performer; the user is autonomous and characterized by creative and imaginative capacities.
- ° Designing the undesigned; leaving some space for emerging opportunities and for going otherwise.
- ° A whole reality; working on different scales and in this occurring in the registers of spaces, narratives, and events.

A similar notion of performative architecture, yet in different wording is brought up by Pedro Gadanhó (2011) in his article “Back to the Streets: The Rise of Performance Architecture”. Using the term “Performance architecture” Gadanhó connects the performative capacity of architecture to the legacy of the performance arts. He associates the work of artists such as Matta-Clark and Trisha Brown to that of the (partly) architectural practices of Stalker and Raumlabor. In both the artistic and the architectural performances he recognizes a “*believe in transient and community-oriented urban actions*”, which to him give form to this generation of what he calls “performing architectural practices”. Gadanhó brings to the front the political potential of architecture and its position “in the street” which he links to the protest happening in the public spaces of Athens, Madrid, Brussels, and London in 2011. A similar claim can be read in Gonzalo Herrero Delicado and Marie José Marcos (2011) their article “Performing architecture”. The performance here is described as way for “*manifesting desire into reality*”.

In the midterm report of the doctoral research –after a process of intensive coding and categorizing–, I describe the notion of the performative. In a letter that I address “to those who wonder” I define the performative nature of the commons architecture as follows:

We have novel values; we look for equality, solidarity, wellbeing, resilience, etc. We aspire to break with the neoliberal system and the commodification of our daily environment. But history has thought us that good intentions do not guarantee good outcomes. We need to be careful. For this, it is our principle to start from people and from the (micro) scale, from which we can co-construct with our own hands and bring in our various skills. It is our belief to value the process -the incremental growth- of a ‘place’. From a temporary structure we can grow to the development of a building block, from there we can grow to ...

We do not have the money, nor the power. But we have energy, ideals, believes... We have each other and our collective eagerness. We each have our particular skills, including those that relate to the architectural profession.

° So we imagine, wildly what we see as possibilities right now and in 20 years. We dream, envision, discuss, agree upon, question.

° So we explore, how we can make things happen. We lobby, we rebel, we wonder, we re-imagine.

° So we construct, whatever we manage to set up within the time that is given to us (the temporary in-between).

(...)

Every act has been a statement. It is a performance “manifesting our desires in reality”

. By acting on our imaginations, by illustrating the possibilities we see, we make them happen. It impacts as we ‘speak’.

Explicit articulation of this performative nature can be found in the effects of the work by Commons Josaphat. By publishing and spreading their proposal, this collective has established a commons claim on Josaphat. Within the Brussels urbanist and activists scene their work is known and referred to as well as beyond at the European level. By explicitly putting Josaphat on the map as a site for commoning and by doing this in a processual and open manner, Commons Josaphat managed to make a strong statement. A statement that through its articulation now acts as a manifestation. The outcomes of this doctoral dissertation and design practice –next to numerous other happenings– might be read as taking part in its performative effects.

The more invisible work embodied in Josaph’Aire has a similar performative nature. Not only does the organization in its bylaws make clear statements to support citizen initiatives. JA also makes explicit claims about what the association stands for. Furthermore, elements of performativity can be found in its open and partly undefined structure and the uncertainty of its current state of affairs.

A more concrete example of the messiness and openness –as claimed by Signore– that comes with the per-formative agency of JA can be found in the story describing the scouting of the project through the proposition and discussion on its modes of governance. The proposal to operationalize its commons-oriented governance through the tripartite structure of (1) a loosely organized and open assembly for decision-making, (2) a juridical structure to support the communities and (3) autonomous projects that could develop their own course within the broader community, was discussed by some of the key actors present in Josaphat’s occupation at that time (summer 2017). The proposal, through its articulation, defined what JA could be/is, as well as the debate around it allowed for non-design and openness. It was felt to be too early for such a distinct and loaded governance model.

That moment JA manifested itself as an infrastructure for a light governance model, which afterward is put in place as such. JA and more specifically the idea of open assemblies, through this articulation, became a manifestation of a willingness and need for shared governance (commoning). Similarly, the agreement to keep it as light and simple as possible also made JA become a more informal and less powerful agent. It illustrates the openness of its performativity and the ambition at that time to maintain the everyday reality as the core of the project in its bringing together of the actors present at Josaphat. Today, it can be felt that –as the JA organism lost some of its “weight” in governance and discussion-making potential– the structure is facing a legitimization crisis while tensions are emerging due to a lack of solid decision-making models as the activities at Josaphat have expanded in the meanwhile. The performative nature does

not necessarily need to the most efficient or stable results, yet it marks –and as such realizes- what we –as commoners- ambition the JA structure to stand for.

Recup’Kitchen as kitchen advocating food sustainability, solidary economy, and debate in the public space, has through its micro-interventions articulated an altering way of dealing with food consumption, economics, and public space. During the preparations for the crowdfunding campaign the –at that moment still coming together- collective of RK had to formulate the ideas and ambitions behind the imagined RK project.

In the discussions that evolved throughout the writing down of the project description for the crowdfunding campaign, the underlying relational values became explicitly articulated and later broadly communicated. In the intensive media campaign that would follow –and thus before the project was realized or a budget was collected- RK already became the embodiment of a critical practice that manifests an alternative.

In the collective formulating and negotiating what RK would be about, RK also became a manifestation of shared governance and decision-making. In this process, people who were interested in joining were welcomed to appropriate the project and bring in their reading, creativity, and values concerning the original imagined idea. Still today, all those involved are asked to contribute in the functioning of RK as well as in the stewardship that is necessary to make the project happen. It is up to all of us to take care of RK’s conception and operationalization to make this venture genuinely sustainable. In this way, RK also performs a commoning attitude that comes with openness.

Through their action, the commons uAD interventions perform an altering approach. In this, the Arch.e makes use of their performative strength to manifest her aspirations and commons-oriented values. Through their creation in on-going processes of imagining, scouting, constructing and caring, the commons uAD initiatives generate another reality. It is in the inventiveness of this improvisation that the performative project fosters an openness that allows users to become active agents in the performative process.

This stands in contrast with what I have generalized as Modern Architect’s architectural practice. Urban (re)development projects with substantial funding and a strong orientation for predictability and control, also change reality through their manifestation. They can do so just by the articulations of their plans, as the MSI’s masterplan profoundly impacts the general perception of Josaphat and influences the agencies on and around Josaphat. As Signore (2014, p. 173) states: “*While we recognize the performative project as specific at our time, we must realize there has always been some performativity*”. Modern Architect tends to stay away from the streets, which Gadanho (2011) demonstrates to be essential to architecture’s performative capacity, and as such he neglect the activist potential performative uAD breaths. Modern Architect’s practice does not welcome the imaginative potential of users, nor are an imprecision, ambiguity, uncertainty and incompleteness regarded as qualities. Modern Architect’s manifestations might more support Economic Man’s hunger for commodification.

In spatial and physical terms the performative nature of commons architecture might be rather weak –certainly in comparison to the performances of Modern Architect-, yet its strength lies in its political and urban activism. At Josaphat’s ground, the house, garden, kitchen and their commoning materialize and embody some of the simmering energies to be found in her air. As such the multitude of actors and projects coming together at Josaphat’s ground strengthen each other and their performative claims. As a whole, the commons uAD manifestations interweave narrative, space, and events together into a collective manifestation of an altering urban future that is practiced today.

### c. Its lebendige

There is some incredible value in the everydayness and simplicity of what happens within Josaphat's commons architecture. The everyday is so overly present, yet it took me quite some time to realize its ubiquity in our commons uAD actions and to appreciate it as an existential facet. This omnipresence of the everydayness resonates with the Arch.e's search for (be)longing, more particularly the longing to improve the quality of life. The "lebendige" pattern furthermore relates to my intense appreciation for cleaning the dishes as it became a significant facet of RK's conception. The everyday also connects to the frustration I experienced as I wondered why I as an architect –having a Modern Architect within me– end up organizing picnics, have set up a kitchen project and as a recurring pattern support gardening activities.

The midterm report of this doctoral research and design has helped me to reflect on this very present, though the invisible aspect of the commons practice. Going photos and documentation that make up the rich data, I had gathered a stack of Polaroid pictures that emerged from the coding exercises. Some of the photos I had selected would not match with the emerging key concepts (see 00.07.fig. 9). I had selected and printed them. There was something about these photos that picture a colorful fruit salad, the tea setting during a meeting at Josaphat and a poster that I had hung at my office stating; *"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow"*. At the time I had labeled them as "Polaroids that float around".

After the midterm report, throughout the on-going coding and categorizing the omnipresence of these "basics" became truly visible. The coding made me aware of the apparent omnipresence of the everyday, the value of the lived and the pleasures found in the ordinary of gardening, cooking and being together. There is a delight in having your hands touch the earth; this tactile, simple yet incredibly beneficial experience. After this eye-opener I could find traces of this "lebendige" facet in the various letters that I had written for the midterm report:

The letter to "the co-travelers":

"Maybe it is exactly this longing to create places for belonging that arose my attraction to the architectural practice. But this eagerness is not a privilege of architects and designers. It is a very human desire or need. All those wonderful people that have been working together, in all of them -one way or another- we can recognize this drive. This basic, simple desire to create a place of "bien-être".

The letter addressed to "those who wonder":

"This temporary place (loaded with all its gained identity, friendship, creativity, values, and longings) has entered our daily lives. In all its smallness it represents the city we see ourselves living in. Our ambitions reach further than where we are now. They drive us to look for all possible means to transition, to stretch beyond. So how can we upscale this little "everyday paradise", how to make it sustain? Isn't that the 'architectural level'?"

The pamphlet that was included in the midterm report to distribute the call for a European Commons Assembly to which I have contributed –as part of the commoners- (European Commons Assembly, 2016):

"At the heart of these acts of "commoning" are satisfying, happy social relationships that regenerate our interpersonal and physical surroundings. We reject the idea that we are merely self-interested individual consumers or competitors in a fierce market jungle.

Instead, we also consider ourselves active and cooperative citizens, caretakers working for healthy and fair neighborhoods, cities and societies.”

After this revelation, the codes such as “basics”, “pragmatism”, “emotional” and “taking care” would cluster and float nearby the codes representing the house, garden and kitchen tripartite. Along them codes can be found such as: “earth”, “sense-making”, “starting from the here and now”, “feeling attached to the ground”, “logic of bricolage”, “vivre ensemble”, “responding to demands”, “simplify”, “starting humbly”, “belonging”, “generating care for commons”, “intuitive understanding”, “common sense”, “being naïve”, “experience”, “cosines”, “adding fun”, “wanting things to move”, “live”, “anchoring” and “in a nice way”. In their totality, they make up this everydayness-oriented pattern that identifies the common-place uAD practice.

The emotional and individual experience of the everydayness connects to the broader aspiration to improve the quality of the urban life. This relates to Christopher Alexander’s devotion to what he named a “quality without a name” (C. Alexander et al., 1977). In the context of commoning Helmut Leitner (2015) has picked up this concept and refers to it as “liveliness”, “whole”, “alive”, “free”, “egoless”, “lively”, “vivid” and “not simply beauty”. Leitner brings up the German “lebendig” as standing most close to Alexander’s concept, and he acknowledges it as the value upon which the search for system improvements is founded. It echoes Participation Architect’s quest for (be)longing that is also fundamental to Commons Architect.e. And it resonates with a feminist approach to urban planning that emphasizes the everyday lived experiences (LaFrombois, 2017). Also at Josaphat, the liveliness turns out to be the driver for its house-garden-and-kitchen and commoning uAD practices.

This lebendige is present in and reinforced through the commons imaginations and the performative nature. Most importantly it is present in the day-to-day experience and entails the motivator for my agency as well as I believe it to be essential to numerous of my fellow agents at Josaphat that are voluntarily engaged. The value attributed to this lebendige aspect is explicitly addressed in our framework considering the transitional use where one of the five key principles mark Josaphat’s being as a place of the convivial and serene atmosphere; this principle is symbolized with a heart.

Jardin Latinis’s stories discuss the work and dedication spend in creating and expanding Josaphat’s pond and in this bring up certain elements that resonate with the lebendige. Not only the gardening as such but also digging up earth during a cold and rainy winter day are part of Josaphat’s liveliness. The stories illustrate how we work in an incremental process of small steps; bit by bit, contributing to what we believe in. In our humble way we try to improve Josaphat as a site of biodiversity. In our everyday liveliness, we provide concrete and ordinary solutions to the sensed need for water evacuation. And in doing so, we sense to escape from the pressures coming with our urban lifestyles. We retreat to nature as we become absorbed by the slow and concrete action of shuffling in Josaphat’s mud. In a small, naïve act we feel to contribute to something bigger in our own mindful and careful way.

In the words of Marisa Borabo; “They (the gardeners of JL) started working, and because we didn’t want to feel useless, we (students of the Spatial Mirror course) decided to dig the pond. While digging we realized, we were doing an intervention, at that moment. By bounding, by being there, by helping, and by giving something to the community. It doesn’t have to be big; I believe that a small action can lead to a big impact.”





August '16  
Image by Paula Bouffieux.



November '15  
A piece I kept at my office

00.07.fig. 9 – Two of the polaroid images that “float around”, photo left by Paula Bouffieux, February 2017.  
> 00.07.fig. 10 – Site visit organized by “dialogues en humanité”, July 2018.





A different approach to this lebendige is appearing in the attention given to cleaning the dishes together and finishing an activity with an “Abschiedsbier”. For Recup’Kitchen, cleaning up together –apart from being a mere necessity- became a part of the project’s identity. By doing, we learned that we do not like to function as a catering service. We are a team of enthusiasts and volunteers that aim to realize sustainability and awareness through moments of cooking and eating together. In this cleaning up together and taking time to have fun is an essential fundamental facet for the project to continue.

Also in the realization of the Maison des Possibles, we have learned it is easier to build and leave behind something than to have to maintain and organize the structure and its activation; the reproductive side. In the words of Ivan: “les communs ça commence en faire la vaiselle!” Like the sensation of touching the earth on a cold rainy day, the feeling of having your hands in a basin of water during a warm day brings a sense of mindfulness. Taking care together becomes a bounding activity; working together through little things, making sense and valuing the importance of reproductive work.

The Abschiedsbier -or for some of us also the goodbye mint tea-, to me is a symbolization of the need to maintain fun and cosines. It brings pleasure and joy which are necessary to keep the required underlying dynamics for commons uAD. As the lebendige appears to be evident, it does need to be actively watched over as to make sure it is not getting lost. As we at Josaphat are increasingly focusing on the more prominent and existential questions that emerge around the negotiations to establish a convention with the MSI, the lebendige fades out to the background and accordingly the everyday liveliness of Josaphat is losing its appeal. In the process of enacting in the here and now the city we aspire for the future, we need to be careful to do so in a nice way. Commons uAD is not a hard revolution, but a lived and gentle transition.

In market mechanisms, the business has to run efficiently and subsequently Modern Architect prefers efficiency and positivist logic for his projects. Also in the participatory processes that Modern Architect has started to incorporate in his planning instrument, he feels that time is ticking, and consultation and concertation need to happen quickly and efficiently. As Josaphat’s RPA masterplan illustrates; it is preferred to have the main outlines solidly fixed before to allow people to mess up everything through participatory processes. You better do not start civic participation too early. Weather in the upcoming public inquiry for Josaphat’s RPA or in the more inclusive and appreciated participatory processes of the Neighborhood Contracts in Brussels; not too much time can be wasted to stand still and chat cozily while having a drink or shuffling some earth.

Also at Josaphat a pressure for efficiency and measurable results can easily overrule moments of conviviality, of being together and of simply acting and anchoring –literally- in the ground. They are overshadowed by pressing questions, the need for meetings and strategic positioning. The on-going negotiation for a convention for temporary use has been draining the commons interventions from their animation. It seems all too easy to get lost in a desire for efficiency and to lose the connection with the very own ground though Commons Architect.e recognizes the lebendige and strongly appreciates the everyday sense-making, emotional awareness, and anchoring. Modern Architect might like to incorporate some more fun into his approach. It should not be overly romanticized; it is hard work to remain close to the basics.

After all, you have to have your eyes open to spot the rare blue dragonfly that hovers over Josaphat’s pond. You need to create the space to allow yourself to be aware of Josaphat’s incredible capacities considering biodiversity in Brussels. You have to stand at her

ground, breath in her air to feel her electrifying potential resonate through your body.

#### d. Its aesthetics

The fourth pattern that identifies the commons uAD practice of the Arch.e is its aesthetics. From the first interventions on –being the garden in plant boxes, a terrace made out of shipping pallets and a rough self-made wooden table- the outlook of Josaphat’s southwest corner is defined by recuperated materials that are mixed and matched in serendipitous ordering (see 00.07.fig.11). This rather messy appearance has been a frustration to me and many of my peers (Mathieu, 2015). There is a strong tie between urban activism and Do It Yourself (DIY) practices that in the case of Josaphat results in improvised and not always entirely comfortable structures made out of recuperated materials.

I have dedicated quite some time working out ideas and imaginations to improve the architectural quality and spatial organization of the micro-interventions proliferating at Josaphat’s southwest corner. After all, I have a fair share of Modern Architect’s obsession for form in me. During the “jour Josaph’Aire dag” I facilitated a workshop in response to this desire to better organize our shared space (see 00.07.fig.12). The workshop is but many, not always very impactful- attempts to satisfy my eagerness to create more coherence in the rough aesthetics of our commons interventions. With the “Huis van de Commons” project, integrated into the Maison des Possibles, I obtained funding that could invest in a more finished structure at Josaphat that as such would facilitate a more welcoming and accessible infrastructure. It was the ambition to with this subsidy invest in the overall look of the garden and its self-built furniture. The money is still there, yet putting this aspired amelioration in place and focusing on this aspect of the architectural turns out to be secondary in practice.

Although the imaginations for a more appealing visual image of our commons uAD interventions still wander, I also came to see value in the messy and somewhat rough aesthetics. Pepijn Kennis of Toestand questions this obsession for the “designed” and finished. While discussing the rather improvised look that characterizes temporary use projects, he pointed this out to me; “I don’t get why there is such a focus on how it is supposed to look, it is important it is made.” In conversation with Uriel Fogué Herreros of the Madrilénian architecture office elii, I found an appreciation for Josaphat’s outlook through his philosophical regard to the notion of aesthetics. Retracing the word back to its Greek origin, Uriel defines two key aspects; aesthetics as experience and aesthetics as cuteness. Especially the first nudged me to look into the lived experience of our physical interventions.

Uriel’s appreciation for aesthetics as experience can be illustrated through our appreciation for the robust wooden table that is central to the Jardin Latinis. Our table might not have the correct ergonomic shape. And if you do not watch out, the table’s rough wood splinters and rips your pants. The feet of the table are crooked, and it’s a challenge to move her around. As the table is made out of solid wood recuperated from pallets, it has been standing the weary weather conditions for three years now. Most of us know its history, taking into account it has been built in an inclusive manner that characterizes the garden. Standing as one of the very first interventions at Josaphat, the table performs its duty in bringing together the present agents and newcomers, and invites them to



00.07.fig. 11 – The appearance of Josaphat's house-garden-and-kitchen interventions, March 2018.



00.07.fig. 12 – A scheme illustrating the diverse type of interventions at Josaphat for the workshop discussing the spatial organization of Josaphat’s interventions, June 2017.

00.07.fig. 13 - Josaphat’s long lasting furniture, including the robust wooden table, August 2016.





00.07.fig. 14 – The interior of the Recup'Kitchen roulotte, July 2017.

00.07.fig. 15 – A collage speculating the final design of the MdP, made to request a temporary building permit, July 2017.



00.07.fig. 16 – The MdP is being covered with a temporary façade, December 2017.

join; to eat, debate, discuss, imagine, etc.

Uriel's way of approaching the notion of aesthetics is complimented by Burak Pak's regard as discussed in his paper "Learning from the urban Commons in Flanders and Brussels" (Pak & Scheerlinck, 2015). Pak and Scheerlinck discuss design strategies they recognize in contemporary bottom-up practices of urban commons. Among the practices that are studied, Pak describes the in 2016 emerging self-proclaimed transitional use of Josaphat. Proposing the playful term "palesthetics", the recurring use of pallets is addressed: "Analyzing these cases, we find a "common" denominator, that is related to the way immediate action takes place to safeguard a common agenda. For example, we notice the extensive appropriation of recycled wood shipping pallets in these cases and how these are combined with the natural elements to create furniture, decks, walls and load-bearing structures. We call this emergent and widespread phenomenon "the palesthetics" of the urban commons." (Pak & Scheerlinck, 2015, p. 7). Describing palesthetics Pak and Scheerlinck list the following characteristics: "ad hocism", "activism", "adaptivity", "temporality" and "incompleteness".

The frustration with the limits of shaping and "designing" our interventions is present in Recup'Kitchen's story considering the construction phase of the mobile kitchen. With a limited amount of time, few means –no tools, no electricity connection-, limited skills and experience with building, we did the best we could, which does not look like a well-designed and finished project, still not today. The RK roulotte's interior is still not finished, and I still dream of having her well organized and nicely equipped, if only to be able to prove we can make an "aesthetic" project. Moreover, I am convinced a more designed outlook would strengthen RK's performative strength.

When looking to the kitchen wagon from the standpoint of aesthetics through experience, I can read her underlying relational values in her messy detailing (see 00.07. fig.14). There are the different types of flooring within the roulotte's limited surface, which we used as we recuperated them or found leftovers to use (activism). There is the stubborn bump that stayed in the vinyl floor, although we had so carefully worked to get the flooring smooth (incompleteness). There are the roughly cut wooden trays that Anna rather spontaneously has installed so that we could have some additional storage space. They might not be perfect, but they make a massive difference in equipment (ad hocism). Most proudly the RK team loves to brag about the working table that is -very hygienic- made out of stainless steel, which is but a recuperated lift door (adaptivity). We had fun painting the wagon. The red touch brings coherence and brands the kitchen's outside and the few types of equipment we have bought. Most importantly since the opening event in April 2016 RK does what she had promised to do; making healthy and sustainable meals in an open and welcoming atmosphere.

The aesthetics of the commons uAD practice have their particular outlook and design that is appreciated through the concepts of palesthetics and the approach to aesthetics as experience and cuteness. Acknowledging the underlying –performative- meaning of the aesthetics that come with recuperated materials, trail-and-error constructions, spontaneous ordering and the like, I now –as Arch.e- consciously mount these aesthetics from this perspective. While working on the request for a temporary building permit for the Maison des Possibles, I deliberately stressed the temporary and DIY appearance in the drawing –imaging- its plans and façades (see 00.07.fig.15). The outline of the plans was based on the already standing bare structure, and our stock of recuperated materials, the assembling of the windows gained form based on our on-site brainstorming. The rep-

resentation of the Maison aspires to breathe the atmosphere anchored in her on-going creation process. The envisaged “finished” state of the House does not look smooth, nor does it aspire to fit in Modern Architect’s architectural language.

In collage-like drawings, I added a hammock (the *lebendige*) and drawing the Maison’s interior space; I proposed furniture that could support the ad hoc demands for the envisaged usage of the House. The façade of the MdP would be an assemblage of recuperated windows, reflecting the surroundings in different degrees and through that representing the different reflections embedded in the house’s being. Today the MdP is still under construction and has not reached her designed commons aesthetics as imagined in the collage. To make the basic house like construction operational for use in winter, the MdP had been temporarily covered by a transparent plastic (see 00.07.fig. 16). The result is a temporary and pragmatic finishing for a temporary structure that we imagine to become still much more richer and finished. While we wait to see which the direction the negotiations considering the convention for temporary use will take, the construction of the house is put on hold. She (out)wears her temporary façade for more than half a year now.

What I have generalized as Modern Architect’s stance is an approach to architecture that is highly based on the visual; favoring neat and seemingly simple forms and finishing. After all Modern Architect preaches “less is more”. Kitsch, irregularity, messiness and the like do not fit in his modernist dogma obsessed with overly designed and controlled objects and spatial arrangements. This obsession with the neat and finished risks to neglect the everyday and their appreciation for kitschy and self-made objects. In the book “A Pattern Language” Christopher Alexander and his co-authors (1977) address that modern aesthetics lack to take the user’s needs into account.

Letting go of the modernist ideal of aesthetics, the notion of *palesthetics* embraces the improvised and often messy design that comes with the bottom-up creation of urban commons. Rather than focusing on visual outcomes, the experience connected to the creation of a commons micro-intervention can trigger valuable appreciation. At Josophat, we experience lived beauty in knowing where the material comes from, who has been assembling them and what is the meaning underlying the built structure. In doing so, we embrace notions of inclusivity, welcoming, caring, etc. as building up these seems to be more feasible and vital to us. It is these particular aesthetics that perform the urban commoning we aspire. Though, we envision/would like to see our interventions to be more appealing to the eye. The Arch.e can be pretty envious of Modern Architect from time to time.

## 00.07.02 The ways how it manifests

I have looked into several of the patterns regarding the what of the house-garden-and-kitchen uAD and their underlying commoning. In this section, I will dig into several of the aspects considering the how of this commons uAD practice. Four patterns will discuss how the practice of the Arch.e manifests at Josaphat. The first (a) brings up the notion of “architecting” and approaches architectural design as a relational and process-oriented endeavor. The second pattern (b) deals with “wandering” as a design strategy for “infrastructuring”. Having no fixed pathway in the design process is looked at to be beneficial to encourage multi-layered openness, future-oriented incompleteness, and strategic dialogue. As a third aspect (c) “commoning governance” not surprisingly shows to be central in the commons-oriented uAD practice of the Arch.e. And to conclude as fourth (d), the relevance of “finding funding” for Josaphat’s uAD practice is discussed.

### a. Architecting

The notion of “architecting” and its relation to the uAD practice at Josaphat build on to the insights that I have discussed with my co-authors An Descheemaeker, Johan Verbeke and Toha De Brant in a paper published in the proceedings of the Incubators conference. In “Finding direction in urbanism through an entangled process of architecting” my Brussels colleagues for Incubators and I (Van Reusel, Descheemaeker, et al., 2017) discuss certain processes happening at Josaphat’s living lab at large. I will give a revised summary of the discussion and insights in this paper considering “architecting”. The original discussion as published in the Incubators proceeding can be found in chapter 00.10 - “Food for thought”.

In the context of the Incubators conference on “Urban Living Labs for Public Space, a New Generation of Planning?” the self-proclaimed for transitional use of Josaphat is related to some of the stakes –matters of concern- for participation in Brussels uAD. Looking at the entangled engagement and the process-oriented approach of the uAD at Josaphat’s living lab at large, the concept of architecting is brought up.

The architects Bengtsson, Tarrés, Kwok, Mardare, Paczkowski express the relevance of “architecting” for their design in of their “Nomadic Shelter / SALT Siida Workshop”. The project depiction -indexed as “Recognition: 205”- is part of the over 300 leaflets that were at display in the exhibition of the Nordic Pavilion for the 15th architectural Biennale di Venezia in 2016, curated by David Basulto. Bengtsson, Tarrés, Kwok, Mardare, Paczkowski (2016) articulate architecting as the understanding of architecture as a process rather than an object. Architecting demonstrates the processual nature of architecture in which the architect engages fiercely and develops a relationship with other people, materials, things, landscapes, territories, et cetera. “When one can just let go and focus on these relationships, ‘architecting’ becomes so entangled with people, their personalities and social upbringing, taking from where they come from and affecting where they are going.”

Marc Belderbos (Belderbos & Verbeke, 2005), his concept of “to architecturate”, translated from the French “architecturer”, adds on a constructivist and interpretive stance to

the architectural profession. His reading of architecture as a verb refers to “a relationship to the real which is not realistic”.

In “Finding direction in urbanism through an entangled process of architecting” we build on the argument of Bengston et al. (2016) that architecting facilitates “taking from where they come from and affecting where they are going”. We claim this process has supported both the doctoral research and design practice at Josaphat’s ground to find direction through a process of collective “envisioning” in the sense Manzini (2014) brings up this notion in his discussion on contemporary uAD. The conclusion of the paper addresses the relevance of such an architecting approach in uAD to potentially support the current –Mela’s third- wave of citizen involvement.

Studying our –we, the commoners and I, the architect-researcher- embodied experiences and design knowledge derived at Josaphat’s living lab at large we see how such architecting translated into the illustrative process of working toward five shared principles for the self-proclaimed transitional use. This reveals an entangled engagement and process-oriented approach to facilitate collective envisioning. Taking from where they/we come, to affect where to go certainly is at stake here. This architecting process at Josaphat helped to find direction for the overall transitional use at Josaphat.

Moreover, the framework that is built around these five principles is also aspired to perform an impact on the broader future of Josaphat. The collectively written charter proposed a transitional approach to the commons practices at Josaphat and as such also aims to affect beyond the existing civic scene that is involved. The charter proactively intended to inform and influence both the official –still to be organized- call for temporary use as well as the at that time on-going Incubators research project.

Seeing how a highly entangled and processual approach –and thus architectural attitude- helped the Josaphat community to find direction, a bridge is made to speculate what the conventional uAD practice at Brussels –embodied in my Modern Architect- could learn from this. In our paper, we relate to the Aarhus Convention (UNECE, 1998) that promotes effective public participation at the appropriate stage “while options are still open”. Linking back to the matters of concern that I have connected to Modern Architect’s behavior in the discussion of chapter 00.05 “A field of tension”, the addressed lack of transparency and participating might be tackled through an architecting design strategy. In search of (be)longing architecting entails the architect –Arch.e- to participate in the livelihood of people and the natural environment, rather than looking how to have these facets participate in the design process.

Anyhow, the architecting approach and its entangled and processual nature resonate with Josaphat’s air. For the Commons Architect.e this design strategy offers a tested –yet in need of further research- way to implement architecture to support the creation of urban commons.

## b. Wandering

A second way in which the uAD of Commons Architect.e manifests itself is captured in the metaphor of “wandering”. I have first introduced this notion as a means of expression in the midterm report of the doctoral research and design practice.

In the paper “Wandering as a design strategy for infrastructuring” (Van Reusel, 2016b) published in the Strategic design Research Journal I discuss the design process of



Recup'Kitchen from her early imaginations in 2015 until here on-going realization and functioning in 2016. Describing the wandering in the de-sign process of RK, I in this paper claim a process of "infrastructuring" is supported through multi-layered openness, future-oriented incompleteness and strategic dialogue.

I here will provide a revised and shortened account of the arguments and findings that are discussed in the original paper. Wandering, as it occurred in the design of RK, might be implemented as a conscious design strategy of the Commons Architect.e. As it supports infrastructuring, such a strategy brings up a way in which architecture can facilitate the creation of urban commons.

In "Wandering as a design strategy for infrastructuring" I first reveal the design journey of RK and highlight how it took a very unstructured course. Furthermore, I address how this stands in contrast with the more traditional design process, here generalized through the caricature of Modern Architect-. If the conventionally more structured design process with its more predictable and reasoned direction and timeframe, is compared to a walk along an outlined path, RK's design process can be described as a process of wandering. The experience of wandering is from my insider perspective articulated in one of my logbook notes: "With a certain sense of direction, you continue your road. Changing tracks, you find your-self lost without a fixed pathway. You get off the path, sometimes lose yourself in the jungle. It is a course in which you meet strangers and find co-travelers that, like you, only have a vague orientation that will get clearer along the road. You use a lot of valuable time and energy, but cross magnificent places, and you realize that you end up with richer experiences."

This wandering in the design process entails serendipity. It embraces serendipity's potential to lead to -often pleasant- surprises and discoveries that make it possible to build skills and socio-material resources to empower (future) stakeholders. Even though wandering seems counterproductive as a design strategy, the experience in the specific case of RK opens up the potential of wandering as a strategy for infra-structuring.

The concept of "infrastructuring" is introduced within the field of participatory design (PD) by Karasti et al. (Karasti, 2014; Karasti & Baker, 2004). It emphasizes the value of building capacity through socio-material resources. Le Dantec and DiSalvo (2013) build onto this notion of infrastructuring in their paper "Infrastructuring and the Formation of Publics in Participatory Design". They claim that the "construction" of socio-material resources becomes a crucial contribution to move beyond the object-oriented participation process. *"Infrastructuring, then, is the work of creating sociotechnical resources that intentionally enable adoption and appropriation beyond the initial scope of the design, a process that might include participants not present during the initial design"* (Le Dantec and DiSalvo, 2013, p. 247).

To reach beyond the initial design scope and the framed project, an orientation toward an on-going use-design gains interest. In this, infrastructuring requires the engagement of stakeholders to build the necessary socio-material capital to pursue an on-going process of innovation. This resonates with what is discussed in section 00.06.01.a; PD as a discipline is diverging. The design practice is increasingly reaching beyond a final and object-oriented outcome, and its open-ended nature is increasingly acknowledged (Manzini, 2015a).

Recup'Kitchen in this context is an interesting example of how it's very open design process allowed for an on-going design that can rely on the socio-material resources that its wandering design process helped to achieve. The imagining of RK went through

different phases and appropriations. In this process, the project regularly disappeared from the radar to later surface again. Its imagining process was significantly open as well as vague and ambiguous.

The design of RK was –and still is- continuously being negotiated, questioned and rethought to respond to the changing and varying needs. Everyone who has appropriated some authorship or responsibility for RK has joined the discussion with their own diverse set of desires and expectations considering RK's conception and functioning. It was not only during the everyday discussions, organized meetings and loose brainstorming that the design concept was altered. Every time the project disappeared from the radar –no matter for how long or brief a period- it became appropriated and transformed by various stakeholders. In the moments when the idea for Recup'Kitchen got revitalized, many personal conceptualizations and critical reflections that had gone their way, had to be brought together again. The loose definition of the project and its appropriations brought on new contributions.

In "*Wandering as a design strategy for infrastructuring*" three aspects of the wandering in RK's design process came up that I claim to result in an infrastructuring approach:

- ° The multi-layered openness of wandering makes it more probable for other actors to appropriate the idea; to get inspired and reconfigure and modify RK's concept. These multiple layers within the openness of wandering allow participants to contribute to the design through their set of values and expectations. Moments of wandering allow for different participants to appropriate and re-arrange the project. This triggers a rich cross-pollination of different perspectives and contributes to infrastructuring.

- ° The looseness of future-oriented incompleteness in wandering triggers more profound levels of engagement and builds on capacities that can serve to continue the design (design-after-design) or initiate other projects. Wandering fosters the self-organization of stakeholders to improve their daily environment in an on-going collaborative ecosystem.

- ° Strategic dialogue develops during diverse moments of collective deliberation throughout the wandering design process. As a lot is left open and is incomplete, important decisions still have to be made collectively along the way. The strategic dialogue in wandering encourages the participants to extend their vision beyond the scope of the local environment and object-oriented aims. While being strongly embedded in the local situation, the various appropriations uncover concerns that relate to broader societal and political questions.

Through these three aspects, I relate the wandering uAD process of RK to infrastructuring. The findings discussed in the paper suggest the design expert –the Arch.e- to "let go" of the design process from time to time as part of a conscious design strategy. However, most aspects of wandering, like "losing control", "diving into messiness" and "embracing uncertainty", at first seem rather undesired. Such a non-design is as a design strategy even in contradiction with itself.

"Wandering as a design strategy for infrastructuring" discusses some of the advantages of a wandering design approach. Firstly, the multi-layered openness of wandering leads to inclusiveness, appropriation, a plurality of values and perspectives, and leaves space for the in-between. Secondly, the future-oriented incompleteness embraces the design process as an on-going one and reaches out toward the future. The third contribution, a strategic dialogue is nurtured through wandering. Wandering leaves space to dream wild before creating a specific articulation of the design concept. Based on the experi-

ences in the on-going design process of RK and the potential that I have discussed here, I call to further experiment with this more random way of designing as a conscious strategy.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the less bright side of a wandering design process. The conceptualization and design process might sound like a nightmare to the Modern Architect (in us). It requires to face continuous adaptations, critical questions, a loss of control, and the need to regularly re-energize the entire process from time to time. I had my fair share of frustrations and worries as I noticed RK's focus on interacting in public space was weakening as my fellow agents stress more on the food aspect of RK's basic concept. A lot of energy and time is invested in sidepaths. Although these loose ends have advantages, all participants are also confronted with the fatigue this triggers. While the silent moments during wandering make it possible to recuperate and re-energize, the design expert has to remain alert to spot upcoming opportunities. To add on, the tea talk with my fellow agents Maité and Anna also reveals they share growing distress considering RK's perceived lack of progress. We share the feeling a too long stagnation of the RK project will endanger the continuation of our commons-oriented kitchen.

Despite its more intensive and uncertain character, wandering is a promising strategy within a contemporary perspective on design. It supports infrastructuring, which allows for the design process to be more open and welcoming toward diverse questions and possibilities of imagining a better situation. This tension and the strength of a collective approach are articulated in the motto of the partner project Jardin Latinis: "Alone you go faster, together we go further". It is in the interest of the Arch.e to further experiment and develop this wandering design strategy in her search to alter Modern Architect's dominating approach and to favor the creation of urban commons. Like the architecting, the wandering needs to be further explored and researched.

### c. Commoning governance

A third pattern relevant to the how of Arch.e's commons uAD practice is to be found in the caring and commoning-oriented governance it manifests. The search for (be) longing to improve the quality of life and to support democratization, finds an explicit expression through what I will here discuss as the "commoning governance" of the commons uAD practice.

A foundation for this reflection can be found in the paper "*(How) can you plan an urban commons? Placemaking, visioning and negotiating for a commons on the Josaphat site in Brussels*" that I wrote together with Philippe De Clerck, Burak Pak and Johan Verbeke (Van Reusel, De Clerck, et al., 2015). Focusing on the agency of Commons Josaphat, we discuss the internal governance of this civic platform and its relation to the aspiration for it to be commons-oriented. In this section, I will blend in some of the findings we have worked out in this paper that has been presented in 2015 with the in the meanwhile built knowledge considering Josaphat's house-garden-and-kitchen initiatives and their commoning agency as represented through JosaphAire.

First and foremost the concept of commoning has dual importance. First, in its caring –reproductive- sense, and secondly as perceive from a political –searching for democratization- perspective. These two facets collide but are for the ease of the discussion

separated.

To start with the caring; in the everyday running of commons uAD practice, the reproductive work shows to be of crucial importance. In section 00.06.02 “Something is in motion” I have already addressed the growing attention for reproductive work and its connection to an altering stance to the architectural discipline (Petrescu, 2007; Petrescu & Trogal (Eds.), 2017). At Josaphat’s ground, the caring is not only to be found in cleaning the dishes, although important but can be illustrated by the reconstructed story considering the “Jour des Communs” as organized by Josaph’Aire. The Jour des Communs entails a day in which the different communities anchored on Josaphat southwest corner come together to get some hands-on tasks done in care of their commons infrastructure. Cutting wood for the stove of the Maison des Possibles, outlying a path, planting tomatoes and building infrastructure for water recuperation become an event. Starting the day by sitting around the table for a discussion on our tactical organization, manifests the aspired commons-oriented governance model. The caring also resonates with the generative aspiration embedded in the practice of commoning. This generativity, as is discussed in the “Commons transition and p2P, a primer” publication (P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017) finds expression in the ambition of the commons movement to foster conditions for life over the long term. Generativity is in the commons discourse oriented towards people and nature and stands in contrast with the extractive tendency of maximizing profit that is personalized through Raworth’s (2017) and Marçal’s (2016) caricature of Economic Man. This generative and caring-oriented facet of the commoning governance demonstrates that commoning comes with a process of taking up responsibilities and having collective caretaking. In this facet of caring the Arch.e can outlive her ambition to improve quality of life.

Subsequently, there is a democratization-oriented facet to what I here discuss as a commoning governance. As mentioned in section 00.04.01, commoning entails the rules, institutions, and modes of (re)production that comes with the stewardship over common resources (Bollier, 2014). In its joint action and creativity in cooperating it is omnipresent and resonates with the *lebendige* (Bollier & Helfrich, 2015b). Crucial in this is that commoning generates logic and (relational) values that are often taken for granted and because of that are at risk of being jeopardized. The political governance associated with commoning is one looking for democratization.

The search for democratization and the interest for commoning relates to our current democratic model and the limits we are increasingly facing there. David Van Reybrouck (2016) in his book “*Tegen verkiezingen*” (Against elections) finely describes the inadequacy of our current democratic model, which is focused on representation through elections. As symptoms of our eroding democratic model, he marks a mutual distrust between decision-makers and citizens, the crumbling down of legitimacy and a crisis of indecisiveness (inefficiency). Van Reybrouck claims the digitalization and use of social media support a shift from central and vertical to horizontal and decentralized. A shift that is recognized to be the breeding ground of the commons movement (Bollier, 2014). In his seemingly simple essay, Van Reybrouck manages to reveal the complexity of the gradations between direct democracy and dictatorship. In the first, legitimacy finds maximal resonance yet appears impossible to manage due to the complete lack of efficiency. The latter brings up the other end of the spectrum. Dictatorship is characterized to lack crucial legitimization but can benefit from maximal efficiency as no time is wasted on long discussions to build accountability. It seems legitimacy and efficiency

make out two opposite poles in the political spectrum (Van Reybrouck, 2016).

The movement of the (urban) commons echoes a call and search for other modes of governing linked to the commoners sensed need to reconsider democracy and the functioning of our political institutions today. Weather on the scale of a city -such as happening in Madrid- or within small scale cooperatives, the discourse of the commons inspires to experiment other and more “just” modes of governance. The commons’ search for democratization manifests in the relationships among those involved. In the words of Bollier and Helfrich (2015a, p. 53): “Those relationships cannot be linear, hierarchical or merely bureaucratic because in a commons the terms of human relationship require authentic social connection and care.” This awakens the interest of the Commons Architect.e who aspires to overcome Participation Architect’s struggle to move away from the bottom-up and top-down dichotomy as well as the hierarchy imposed in the very own notion of “participation”.

The entangled combination of caring and democratization within what I named to be commoning governance entails a basic pattern of how the commons uAD practice of the Arch.e plays out at Josaphat. In our paper discussing the commoning governance within Commons Josaphat, Philippe and I studied our lived experience as members of this civic platform. We (Van Reusel, De Clerck, et al., 2015) build on to the arguments of Van Reybrouck. Hovering in-between the desire for more legitimacy and a necessity for efficiency, we –the commoners- find ourselves in a continuous balancing act to negotiate in-between. In “(How) can you plan an urban commons” published in the proceedings of the IASC conference on urban commons, we discuss this position of on-going mediation as following: *“We would like to conclude with a more poetic-metaphoric statement on the CJ ‘planning’ approach. (...) However, the radical openness of the CJ collective, while a source of many problems and unclarities, contributes to constant questioning of its approach both internally and externally. Hence, emerging out of this openness are the conditions for a continuous rebalancing on the tightrope walk between efficiency and legitimacy.”*

Building on the lived experiences at Josaphat now (June 2018), I can affirm our concluding argument stating that commoning comes with a ceaseless balancing between those anchors at each end of the tightrope. Commoning within a commons uAD practice entails a never-ending questioning and re-questioning of legitimacy in the struggle to move on and maintain efficiency. As long as this –sometimes conflictual and quite exhausting- negotiation process is going on; I hope to remain sufficiently aware of maintaining our commoning ideals.

The commoning governance, with its caring and democratization-oriented facets and the tightrope balancing act in practicing it, is illustrated by the agency of JosaphAire. To start with the juridical structure had been set up to support a more formal relationship with the MSI. The writing of the bylaws went hand in hand with existential questions on the positioning of our actions and our approach to commons-oriented governance as well as our aspired relation towards the Region’s authorities. We deliberately did not name a president to maintain a horizontal internal organization. Crucially the creation of the asbl structure was a step ahead moving away from a “we” against “they” polarization of the bottom-up and top-down distinction. Though, I would not state we are there yet, the agency of JA is running through an intriguing process as the nonprofit is negotiating a convention for temporary use with the MSI.

Furthermore, the process of proposing and experimenting a commoning governance

structure –the proposed parliament- as explained in the story on scouting Josaph'Aire, illustrates the amount of time and energy that is dedicated to building up commoning governance. As the reconstructed story also reveals, reality and the as ideal aspired governance do not collide, and as such, we maneuver our way through to find the right balance.

Another strong liveliness of the tense balancing endeavor that makes up commoning governance is represented through the “jours des communs”. This recurring event does not only aim to contribute to caring with its generative and reproductive facets. The day for the commons furthermore concerns a political layer. With the on-going negotiation for the convention of temporary use, meetings and debates at Josaphat tend to be overshadowed by loaded discussions considering our strategic positioning towards the MSI. All the complexities and shifting realities this bears, tend to overrule the governance that needs to be invested in the everyday running of Josaphat's commons uAD interventions. The Jour des Communs aims to provide counterweight for this weighty strategic debates by investing in hands-on working together and decisions making at the field. The Arch.e should be mindful about the fact that determining where to plant the tomatoes and deciding which installations to invest in for water recuperation also make up the commoning governance. Politics considering tactical decisions as much make up the governance that characterizes the way of working at Josaphat.

A collective indecisiveness determines Josaph'Aire's current state of uncertainty; the negotiations for a convention raise the question in how far we are willing to let go of our ideals in a trade-off with pragmatism. The future can still head any direction; from finding a solid agreed-upon convention that would go for all parties, to being forcefully evicted from Josaphat's ground and all the gradations in-between. The experiences within JA consolidates our (Van Reusel, De Clerck, et al., 2015) argument that the aspired commoning governance constitutes a balancing act between the efficiency and legitimacy spectrum.

The stressful debate evolving around the convention did manage to bring a, to our standards, high number of Josaphat agents around the table to decide upon a joint strategy, which resulted in the proposal of an alternative convention for temporary use (see 00.07.fig. 18). Time still has to tell if we will manage to obtain the convention and if so to learn if this did not jeopardize our position more than it would strengthen us. And as such, we keep on balancing on our tightrope, moving forward and backward, looking not to fall.

#### d. Finding funding

A crucial aspect of how the commons uAD practice manifests at Josaphat is present in the economics behind it. The creation of civic spaces in general show to not only experiment more inclusive forms of governance but often establish a collaborative economy. Moreover, the commons economics entail an approach to capital and funding that is broader than the mere financial and monetary aspect of it. As our Arch.e is exploring how to cope with Economic Man, this monetary facet matters.

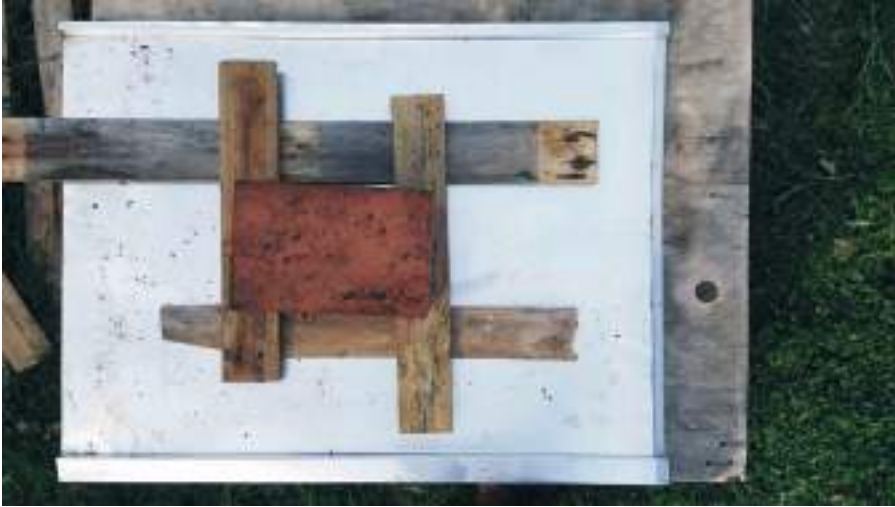
Our concerns to find funding for our interventions at Josaphat resonate with the more extensive discussion on citizen initiatives in Europe –and beyond- and their quests to obtain the needed capital for creating, upgrading, renovating and even purchasing their





00.07.fig. 17 – The JL in its early development started with the use of recuperated materials, August 2015.

00.07.fig. 18 – The structure of the Forum in use by the Josaph'Aire community, June 2018.



00.07.fig. 19 – The MdP under construction: preparing the roof, September 2017.

spaces in the urban environment. In “Funding the cooperative city” Patti and Polyak (2017) discuss diverse funding mechanisms that citizens deploy such as crowdfunding. In their book Patti and Polyak discuss cooperative city projects and their funding schemes go hand in hand with social innovation and benefit from civic spaces in cities such as Madrid, Rome, Bratislava, Warsaw, and Rotterdam. Although we can only dream of setting up an anti-speculation foundation as the ExRotaprint project in Berlin managed to do, many parallels can be drawn with the measures that are described to fund the cooperative city.

At Josaphat different ways of financial and socio-material funding have been implemented. In their diversity, they represent the varied approaches and ambitions their initiatives aspire. Every commons uAD project on its own explores what financial scheme might match best. Overall the needed budgets remain rather small –the highest being 13.200 euro-, for Modern Architect this seems peanuts while for the Arch.e these can already be a challenge.

To start, most of the projects such as the Jardin Latinis kick off with what is at hand. Its community skillfully takes advantage of materials – by the market often considered as waste- that can be easily recuperated. If any, only small investments are made. The garden initiated with some reused wooden boxes and quickly expanded with a recuperated terrace made out of shipping pallets and a series of big white containers coming from an old fish shop (see 00.07.fig. 17). All of it is put in place by a team of engaged volunteers. Later on, a small contribution in the form of an enrollment fee is asked to cover the costs of necessary investments such as more plant boxes and the purchasing of the earth. Subsequently, small subsidies have been obtained by the gardeners. Not all of the subsidies projects –such as a chicken run- got carried through as their realization also demands time and energy to be dedicated.

Recup’Kitchen then went through a more challenging adventure for its funding by engaging in civic crowdfunding. In the end, this showed to be more rewarding in building social rather than financial capital. The civic crowdfunding resulted in a significant sense of participation; the intensive campaign made the project known, had people explicitly contribute to its realization and helped a core group of enthusiast volunteers come together. Over 150 donations were received, showing that people believe in the project, which resulted in a budget of more than 7000 euro that could be rather freely used. Having great autonomy, RK could kick off quickly while thriving of the legitimization and support provided by its community. Though we will not easily repeat the trick due to the stress and demand of energy that comes with organizing a crowdfunding campaign.

With this starting capital, RK had enough to get launched smoothly. Since then the initiative can sustain due to the free donation price asked for its meals and occasional catering activities that help to bring in some additional cash. The current financial situation of RK is comfortable, yet dreams for future investments emerge; currently, the collective is saving for a bike-kitchen. On the long term, the RK team hopes to create employment to advance RK further. One day we might set up a cooperative.

With the Maison des Possibles, a more complicated funding scheme is at stake. The original project of Make-It thrives of recuperated materials and is auto-financed by its main creator Ivan Markoff. The merging project of the Huis van de Commons had received a subsidy of 10.000 euro intended for physical investments. Both projects and funding schemes came together in the Maison that in the mean-while –notwithstanding

the fact enough budget is available- also received additional financing in the form of a personal donation. It is the amount of energy and dedication that the volunteers invest in the actual realization of the structure that makes the MdP stands at Josaphat. The mish-mash of funding schemes gives the house shared ownership; making the project more a commons as well as it complicates its governance.

At the moment most of the budget obtained through the subsidy for the Huis is still to be spent after all the Maison is still under construction. To have this budget at hand is comfortable but in hindsight, the subsidy might have more valuable contributed to the project through its formal recognition. Different from the other project we proposed to the MSI, the MdP became the first structure at Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use to be explicitly approved by Josaphat's owner. That is, as soon as all the administrative requirements –including a temporary building permit- were met the MdP would be our first legal structure at Josaphat. The subsidy and the more formal framework that it requires have triggered a beginning institutionalization and formalization of the commons uAD practice.

Following the garden, kitchen, and house, Josaph'Aire has been founded without any budget and only recently obtained funding for an event-based project. "FAIRE" obtained a budget of 13.200 euro in the framework of the "Bruss-it" call by the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) that aims to support intelligent and shared use of space in Brussels. As the project comes with financing granted by a public administration, this implies FAIRE cannot controversially go in against governmental decisions such as the decision to develop a neighborhood at Josaphat.

Learning from the experience with the MdP, the project application for FAIRE was beforehand discussed with the MSI and marks a willingness to work together, even though this collaborative approach had its struggles. This makes the project to currently be in considerable uncertainty as it in its constructive ambition entirely relies on the obtaining of a formal convention for temporary use. At this moment the subsidy and the related FAIRE project are put on hold. Funding from governmental actors shows to come with some risks. It can be both strategic for collaboration as potentially jeopardizing autonomy.

In addition to the three-plus-one of the house, garden, kitchen and there something more, I would like to briefly reflect on the Forum (see 00.07.fig. 18). This intervention at Josaphat consists of a round structure made out of shipping pallets that claims an outsider position to Josaph'Aire. The main ambition of this project that is designed by the architect Gaspard Vanparys aims to form a place for discussion about Josaphat and her future. Moreover, it aspires to be an urban commons, although the strong autonomy and independence with which this project claims its position, hinders truly commoning governance.

Initially, this project was intended to be realized in partnership with –even as part of- Josaph'Aire and had received a share of the budget dedicated to the Maison. According to Gaspard's presentation, the construction of the physical structure received help from over 30 volunteers –me being one of them. As the Forum increasingly went its course, the donated money had been paid back to strengthen the own autonomy of the project. Today the structure and the work of its architect are financed by one private donation. The patron accordingly claims the sole juridical responsibility for the project. The private funding brought a strong autonomy and independence, yet the legitimacy and transparency of the project have significantly weakened as the Forum is distancing its

agency from the other Josaphat agents.

Furthermore, the Forum with its explicit counter position toward the development plans for Josaphat forms a thorn in the eye of the MSI. The structure is generally appreciated for its architectural quality, yet the provocative attitude of its creators has enflamed the MSI's dedication to take it down. Its surrounding Josaphat communities now are puzzled whether to defend the structure or not. Searching complete autonomy it seems this performative uAD intervention has eroded its social capital. This project offers an intriguing contribution to the biodiversity of agencies playing at Josaphat, while at the same time it illustrates the challenging balancing act between legitimacy and efficiency to be entangled with the funding scheme.

There is also indirect funding investing in the commons-oriented initiatives at Josaphat, happening through my professional engagement as architect-researcher and the time and energy spent by members of BRAL. Also here transparency and legitimacy are not that evident and have provided content for discussion. And then there indirect funding through the "favor" we receive from the MSI to grants us –although we have boldly claimed it ourselves- the right to use their property without any financial compensation. At least this is the tone underlying the negotiations for the convention for temporary use. If Josaph'Aire will sign the convention and acknowledge this standpoint remains still open.

All the diverse funding mechanisms together have accumulated quite a sum. And then I have left out the funding of other related initiatives such as Commons Josaphat, the Comité de Site Josaphat, the Navez garden and Potamoes that bring in additional subsidies, time investments, and material resources as well as the broader social capital. Overall the funding schemes that invest in the commons architecture remain mainly outside of the capitalist market forces. Civic crowdfunding, personal donations, recuperation of materials and the like help to find means of existence and to finance the construction of Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use interventions. This financing is situated at the edge or outside of the neoliberal model. The social capital shows to be at least as essential in funding commons uAD practices; infrastructuring also finds its relevance here. This socio-material perspective fits in the commoning ideation. The projects take up a generative approach, and in their complex accumulation, the uAD practices build resilience as the combination of different funding schemes support both autonomy and legitimacy.

## 00.07.03 The space where and when it situates itself

Complimentary to the discussion considering the what and how of the practice of the Commons Architect.e, this section will dive into the where and when of it. In this light, I will discuss (a) “the sites of actions” at which the commons uAD practice is situated. Seven atmospheres that are in reality inextricably interlinked will be addressed. Josaphat’s ground as location of the Commons Architect.e consists of (1) a living lab at large, (2) a physical site, (3) social networks and relations, (4) skills and knowledges, (5) the interstitial space (6) the digital world and (7) a political scene. The when of the commons uAD practice at Josaphat will be positioned at (b) the transitional.

### a. Sites of action

Studying the space in which Josaphat’s commons uAD practice is situated, I found inspiration in the book “Spatial agency” by Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till (2013). The listed and discussed practices of spatial agency have a remarkable correspondence with the house-garden-and-kitchen agency of the Arch.e. More specifically the chapter on “The sites of spatial agency” gave me insights considering what I will call “the sites of actions” at which the doctoral research and design practice are situated.

Informed by the work of Awan et al. (2013), I will discuss seven atmospheres to make up the sites of action of the commons uAD practice. Understanding the “architectural” in the wide –altering- sense of the word, these seven atmospheres considering Josaphat’s ground are; (1) a living lab at large, (2) the physical site, (3) social networks and relations, (4) skills and knowledges, (5) the interstitial space and (6) the digital world and (7) the political scene. These atmospheres show to have a strong affiliation with the frontiers that our forming Research Collective envisions for critical spatial practices (Pak, Van Reusel, & Romero, forthcoming). These frontiers also acknowledge a shift toward the non-spatial, which includes the social as well a different temporality and the virtual.

I want to demonstrate that dividing the sites of action in these seven atmospheres is an artificial division as “it is in the nature of all spatial production that boundaries are blurred” (Awan et al., 2013, p. 65). In reality, the practice of the Arch.e is to be situated at the inextricable stratification of these sites of actions.

The first atmosphere relates to the discussion within chapter 00.03 “Feet on the ground” considering Josaphat as a living lab at large. There I have brought together Josaphat’s identity as commons lab with its being as a site of action. Furthermore, the location of the Arch.e is situated at a ground where research and activism overlap and theory and practice entangle. Josaphat’s ad hoc now resonates with its long term future, and the micro-interventions interact with the neighborhood scale.

Furthermore, this living lab at large is strategically situated at Josaphat in recognition of its symbolic position toward the future of our city as elaborated in chapter 00.05 “A field of tension”. Moreover, Josaphat is also symbolic for relevant matters of concern for Brussels’ contemporary uAD field.

It is precisely this layered constellation mingling academic and civic research, theory and practice, now and then, small and large scale, regional interest and everyday liveliness, professional practice and voluntary engagement, urban activism and official



planning, etc. that make Josaphat a relevant breeding ground for the persona of the Arch.e to develop her identity.

As a second atmosphere of the sites of actions, the physical site relates to Josaphat's bodily being and the visible structures that partly make up and manifest the commons uAD practice. These structures show to have a high degree of adaptability, to link with technical know-how and reveal particular materiality. The construction site of commons uAD though extends beyond the mere built and also includes the natural environment. Gardens and the broad natural landscape are an existential part of making the city. The intense physical presence of nature at Josaphat reinforces an embodied awareness considering the place that is (not) offered to nature in our urban environment.

The physicality of the location of the commons practice also plays out in the collective and hands-on construction process. Here Patrick Bouchain's architecture office "Construire" is an inspiring reference in their practice of the "chantier ouvert"; the open construction site as design practice in which the building process is incorporated as a part of the collective creation of a place (Bouchain & Julienne, 2010). Also at Josaphat, the "building site" is opened up. This furthermore acknowledges the physical atmosphere of commons uAD that is strongly present in the process-oriented construction process of Josaphat's micro-interventions. The lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing built on Josaphat's ground, however, also provide the insight that technical realizations in themselves do not even have to be achieved participatory. The expertise in physical construction, spatial awareness, and technical detailing remain skills on their own. The physical atmosphere of action of the commons practice addresses the most explicit form in which the spatial intelligence associated with the profession of the architect – Arch.e – reveals itself. If you want things to get done, there is no need to make a participatory event out every construction phase. The flooring of the RK roulotte was already challenging enough with the three of us. The larger on-going transformation processes of the kitchen, house, and garden are shared endeavors.

The physicality also demonstrates the materiality that supports commons uAD. The materiality of recuperated materials, the adaptability and ad hoc nature of the built structures, their incompleteness and temporality relate to Pak's notion of palesthetics and the urban activism anchored in it. In their aesthetics the commons interventions also performatively manifest the underlying values that come with the commoning. Intertwining the material and social, the object and subject, and the body and mind, the notion of "social materiality" (Dale, 2005) finds its relevance in this context of the physical site of action. The commons materiality resonates with the everydayness of Josaphat's agency and its entanglement with its commoning aspirations.

This social materiality bridges to the third atmosphere consisting of social networks and relations. It gives space to the less visible organization of the commons agency and recognizes it as an indispensable element of the uAD process. Furthermore interdisciplinary and collaborative ways of working interweave in the sites of action and make the boundaries of this space shift. Cooking and eating together become spatial practices, while architecture manifests itself in the construction of a somewhat improvised kitchen. Water management and nature are proposed to be the very foundations for urban planning while urban development is approached as an essential practice for healthcare.

At Josaphat, the atmosphere of social networks and relations is represented in the work of Josaph'Aire with its search for commons-oriented governance models and its ambition to set up projects such as FAIRE, which are aimed to strengthen Josaphat's so-

cial tissue around a concrete spatial intervention. Further-more the Jour des Communs renders the social underlay of tactical decision-making and collective care-taking visible through the eventual. This activity facilitates Josaphat to become a place that “belongs to us all”, responsibilities included. In this everyone can contribute with their expertise, their social networks and co-make the space through their person.

As fourth the interstitial space –or the edge- defines one of the atmospheres that make up the sites of action for the commons practice. The interstitial space recognizes the positioning of the house, garden, kitchen and commoning activities to be situated in the gaps of, outside of or at the fringe of the neoliberal market. It is connected to the power relations that come with the legal ownership over commodities such as Josaphat’s territory. Commons Architect.e feels most comfortable in this interstice and appreciates how this flou area leaves space to manifest relational values disconnected from Economic Man’s obsession with financial gain. The convention that is under negotiation between the MSI and JA in its current draft acknowledges the social and environmental value of JA’s agency.

The temporary in this has significant potential. The Toestand nonprofit –renowned in Brussels for its social and successful practices of temporary use- recently published the book “Leegstond” (Dirkx, Kennis, & Destrijcker, 2018) in which temporary use is acknowledged as an opening in the neoliberal system, which otherwise dominates the city. With affiliation to the squatting milieu, temporary use in the reading of Toestand makes use of “hidden public spaces” with an ambition for content more than a financial investment.

The foggy field in-between the temporary and transitional use of urban space is addressed by Toestand and has been profoundly researched by Aurelie De Smet (2013). In the next section that discusses the transitional positioning of the commons uAD practice I will further discuss this and focus on the potential of tactical urbanism to inform a “tactical urban planning” approach (De Smet & Van Reusel, 2018). The Josaphat actions have consciously –or at least in my agency- picked up this interstitial potential of using waiting space.

The freedom offered within this interstice creates space for experimentation and as such connects back to the atmosphere of the living lab at large. In resonance with both, the fifth atmosphere of skills and knowledge comes in. This layer of the site of actions includes hands-on building techniques, gardening as well as the training of broader skills. It is embedded in the everyday reality of Josaphat; whether if it is naturalists sharing their knowledge on fauna and flora, people exchanging recipes or someone showing me how to best saw wood. Many forms of expertise are (further) developed and cross at Josaphat. Intellectual debates, commoning, developing political strategies, drawing plans and making up budgeting exploring commoning governances... they interweave with mindfulness, body awareness and restoring contact with nature. Hand-on, concrete and tactical knowledge blends in with intellectual, dreamy and strategic work.

Haraway’s (1988) notion of situated knowledges also finds its relevance here. It is furthermore also dis-cussed in Awan et al. ‘s (2013) “Spatial agency” that provides a vital inspiration for the discussion on commons uAD’s sites of actions. The local and partial character of knowledges –plural- is inherent to the uAD practice that manifests at Josaphat’s southwest corner. Complimentary, the social atmosphere supports these situated knowledges and their inherent attributes to reach beyond. As situated knowledges are embedded and shared in social networks and relations, skills and understand-

ings become part of a larger sum of knowledges that are built in these social networks. This results in a broader set of knowledges which value the everyday and local skills and understandings beyond their technical and localized use. Presenting and discussing the work of Commons Josaphat and the Josaphat agencies in Plovdiv (Bulgaria) makes the lived experiences, and designerly ways of knowing that are collectively built around Josaphat reach beyond and entangle with unfamiliar –post-communist- contexts. The knowledges and skills of commons architecture –building on this reasoning- thus also extend far beyond the learnings and findings I –as architect-researcher- obtained throughout the doctoral research and design practice discussed in this written account here. Josaphat's skills and understandings, its situated knowledges have been developed through different personas and with varying attitudes. I am but one of them –of we, the commoners- and through my entangled identities as architect-researcher, one of the commoners and architect-writer I contribute to extending Josaphat's knowledges to reach beyond its physical site, the interstitial space and the other atmospheres that make up her sites of action.

Sixth, the digital atmosphere has manifested through the Incubators of Public Spaces research but also relates to the online presence –Facebook and websites- of initiatives such as Recup'Kitchen, Jardin Latinis, Josaph'Aire, and Commons Josaphat.

The digital world supports the atmospheres of social relations and networks and skills and knowledges that also make up the sites of action of the commons uAD practice. This is represented in the use of social media and the distributed knowledges they help to build. Incubators aspired to advance its potential through combining crowdsourcing, 3D modeling, and crowdfunding. In order to support democratization, the Incubators experience at Josaphat has taught the digital world is dependent on the political decision-making behind it.

The seventh and final atmosphere makes up the political scene. This profoundly resonates with the earlier discussed concept of commoning governance. Josaphat as the location of the commons uAD practice entails a democratization facet inherent to commoning. It functions through commoning governance that is entangled with sharing responsibilities, an internal horizontal organization and that mainly consists of a verb. After all, it is a continuous and challenging endeavor to walk the tightrope and find a balance between legitimacy and efficiency. In the internal politics, also caring with its generative and reproductive sensibilities, have a crucial impact in this political scene of the commons practice.

Also in position to Josaphat's beyond, the political makes up a very present share of Josaphat's air. If only in the negotiation of the convention for temporary use power games, a struggle to move beyond a top-down and bottom-up dichotomy and a hung for autonomy that comes with the right for critical positioning are being negotiated with the MSI. Moreover, Commons Josaphat's legacy still plays out, and Josaphat as a commons lab maintains its identity as an independent political platform of citizens that claims their right to rethink and re-imagine the current state of affairs of urban development in Brussels. The Commons Architect.e certainly can live up the metaphor that describes the design process as a game of chess. Which step will we take next? What impact and counter-reaction might it trigger, both internally and externally? What am I / are we willing to sacrifice and what will be the tradeoff? Which direction should we move toward?

## b. The transitional

The when in which the Arch.e situates her practice is positioned in the temporary use of Josaphat while awaiting its planned development. There is something particular about this temporary and self-proclaimed transitional positioning, which I have briefly touched upon in the discussion around the interstitial atmosphere in the previous section. This transitional condition hosts the “huis-tuin-en-keuken” architecture in a timing that locates in the edge of the neoliberal market mechanisms. In this gap, or “free zone” as Toestand claims it, more open experimentation and social mixture can thrive (Dirkx et al., 2018). This interstitial timing also connects to Josaphat’s political underlay as well as her identity as a living lab at large as it blends the concrete of the here and now with the visionary of the long term. These complimentary atmospheres trigger an aspiration for the commons uAD practice to extend beyond the mere temporary in-between and nudges the Josaphat agents to look beyond; it reveals a transitional ambition.

In this section, I will relate to the insights obtained from my master dissertation experience where I took part in the self-organized temporary use the locals and I had set up at the Boerenhof site in Ghent (Van Reusel, 2014). I will here relate the findings that Aurelie De Smet –being one of the supervisors of my master dissertation- and I have derived by looking back at the Boerenhof endeavor to the current undertakings at Josaphat. I will briefly give an account of the visionary proposal by Commons Josaphat considering the transitional potential of Josaphat’s temporary use.

In the paper “*How one tree could change the future of a neighborhood*”, De Smet and I (2018) re-analyzed the Boerenhof experience through a learning by reflection method. Looking in hindsight at the self-organized activist temporary use in which I, as a student had actively engaged and which Aurelie had closely followed up, we restudied this action research. In our paper, De Smet and I (2018) briefly narrate the Boerenhof story as follows: “*On March 23, 2014, a small but very symbolic tree was planted on the vacant and bare terrain of the Boerenhof. This act triggered a series of self-organized, bottom-up actions and events that eventually altered the future of the Boerenhof. The planting of the tree was done by a group of dedicated neighbors and represented a critical moment in their resistance against the planned redevelopment of the site. This tangible action initiated a transversal (Petrescu, 2005), incremental and desire driven process that gradually accumulated into the creation of a collective neighborhood park instead of the officially planned parking lot.*”

Reflecting upon the Boerenhof experience as we had closely lived and followed it in 2014 and additionally taking into account the follow-up process of co-creating the official Boerenhof park; Aurelie and I recognize three key aspects. We define the Boerenhof’s design process to have resulted in an incremental approach, a desire-driven program, and a transversal collaboration. We claim these aspects can inspire a renewed approach to spatial planning as we speculate they could contribute to “tactical urban planning”. And although the Boerenhof experience is significantly different to what is happening at Josaphat, interesting parallels can be drawn. The findings Aurelie and I bring up in our paper can also be relevant for the commons uAD practice at Josaphat. Comparing the Boerenhof and Josaphat situation in flight, the first shows to be situated in a different context. The Boerenhof site is located in Ghent, which as a city has a much less complex administrative and governmental organization than Brussels. The scale of the Boerenhof (0,36 hectare compared to Josaphat’s 25) is of an entirely different order

and does not endure the loaded financial and regional interests Josaphat has to bear. Both areas are publically owned and had been acquired in the assignment of the local government with the ambition to invest in the public good. Both welcomed a community of citizens calling to change the plans at stake and had voices criticizing the lack of participation and transparency considering their planned futures. Both sites provide ground for self-organized and activist use of their land, which fit the notion of “tactical urbanism”. At both the Boerenhof and Josaphat, the micro-interventions in self-proclaimed transitional use shape urban spaces in a more flexible, innovative and participatory approach and do so through a plurality of tactical experiments. Where the Boerenhof –after half a year of such tactical urbanism actions– was able to manifest a turning point and had successfully triggered the official plans to become adapted, at Josaphat the situation is still in limbo after more than three years of action.

Despite these differences between the Boerenhof and Josaphat, the three key elements that De Smet and I describe can also be recognized in the commons uAD practice, albeit it not (yet) reaching the pivotal moment the tactical urbanism at the Boerenhof managed to establish. As a first element, there is the transversal collaboration. The micro-interventions at the Boerenhof –such as planting a tree, sowing flower beds and making a bench– got bit by bit more anchored. They evolved from fragile and ephemeral to more structural changes, such as parceling the garden and making paths. And as the tactical interventions at the Boerenhof gained weight, the actors at the “top” became more and more involved. The official administrations and political decision-makers moved from opposition, over tolerance to debate and finally recognition. Mutual understanding and respect were crucial to set up this transversal collaboration.

At Josaphat, we –so far– do not succeed to directly impact on the planned development as was the case at the Boerenhof, though a similar shift is on-going. The *Jour des Communs* illustrates how interventions and their maintenance at Josaphat move toward a more infrastructural scale –taking care of the paths, managing the garbage and working on the recuperation of water. The posture of the MSI toward the civic agents at Josaphat has shifted from 2014 until now (2018). From completely ignoring our emails and requests for permission of our activities to sitting together around Josaphat’s crooked table to discuss a convention for temporary use. The contact with the MSI has become less conflictual and more open, although we still have our frictions today. Being well aware Josaphat’s situation is more complicated, I can recognize a similar tendency of an increasing transversal collaboration. This is illustrated by the MSI’s changing tone in approaching us –although still being authoritarian– and is marked by their proposal to offer us a convention for temporary use –although being a way to search control over us. Knowing that in 2015 most of our reach-outs would be ignored and our interventions at best were tolerated, I can see it as a step forward to have gotten to this form of –albeit restrictive– recognition. Whether if this recognition will be formalized and accepted or not, remains open. The proposal for a convention that is currently on the table even goes as far to include a proposal (obligation) to set up an “*accompagnement*” consisting of regular meetings between the MSI and JosaphAire to exchange information, ideas and concerns for Josaphat’s being today and her upcoming future.

The incremental approach then forms the second key element. Self-organized micro-interventions develop and grow both physically, socially and politically. What starts small –and cute– gradually gains weight and anchors. Due to this a lasting impact becomes bit by bit more likely, if only because the whole of temporary micro-interventions

become big and robust over time. Starting nomadic allows for flexibility and answers direct needs through concrete and light actions. Behind them lies more complex and long-term ambitions that slowly gain more form and anchor at Josaphat's ground. In this sense, the incremental approach comes with an entangled collision of flexible and spontaneous actions and long term visioning. Tactics and strategies do not stand apart and find each other in incremental growth.

At Josaphat, the punctual events initiated by Commons Josaphat did not manage to get the same weight the Jardin Latinis has established through its more permanent –yet temporary- presence. Through regular events, the nomadic garden would incrementally grow and expand its activities. In three years the JL developed from a dozen wooden crates to a garden that also involves permaculture, composting, water recuperation, a pond and more. The underlying visioning would solidify accordingly; activities came with debates on food production in the city, an awareness on food as a commons, the valuing of social cohesion in the city and eco-political sensitivity for the biodiversity of Josaphat. Similar Recup'Kitchen started as a light intervention in the form of a mobile kitchen, yet due to administrative circumstances, the kitchen wagon has not moved a meter since her installation on Josaphat's ground. Also, the Maison turns out to be a complex construction, despite its design to be demountable and to have no foundation anchored in the soil; the structure is secured at Josaphat. This incremental growth and its impact are not unnoticed by the MSI neither. Throughout the negotiation process for the convention, its agents expressed their fear we might completely colonize Josaphat's southwest corner –and as such risk its planned development- if they would allow us to build anything we want.

As a third element there is the desire-driven program. This comes with a shared critical and constructive attitude. At the Boerenhof, neighbors showed to be willing to create and care for their self-initiated park. In their tactical implementation, desired interventions also came with responsibilities. Furthermore, these micro-interventions come with in-depth debates considering the neighborhood and ecology at a more significant scale. At the Boerenhof the articulated demand for a green and quiet space came with taking the particular diversity of its neighborhood into account. As the micro-interventions expanded, also the image and expectations further developed and gained form. Through the shared spatial creation process, desires, needs, and values gained focus along the way. This, in a later phase significantly contributed to the collective planning and realization of the Boerenhof Park.

Also at Josaphat desires and their underlying values –finding direction- get sharpened throughout the on-going construction process of the commons uAD interventions. A garden is more than growing vegetables and as such the JL focuses more on the direct neighborhoods and the creation of social cohesion. Moreover, the garden gives expression to the desire to reconnect with nature. The JL concerns more than gardening in the strict sense of the verb. As more and more interventions pop-up, a need for collective governance becomes explicit and leads to the setting up of assemblies. These assemblies discuss both strategic –considering the pending convention- and tactical –*Jour des Communs*- questions and in this combine the need to find ad hoc solutions with awareness on issues at a city scale.

Not only the experience at the Boerenhof has informed my awareness to the transitional as being a valuable facet of the where and when of commons architecture. The civic platform of Commons Josaphat (2015b) and their collectively written proposal



“Josaphat en commun” also provide inspiration. CJ makes the potential they read in the transitional explicit in their proposal for Josaphat as a commons neighborhood in which a section is dedicated to this aspect. To CJ, temporary use is the first step toward a shared and incrementally developing governance. Their proposal takes the early temporary use initiatives happening at Josaphat (until 2015) into account and recognizes their transitional potential. In these interventions, CJ recognizes a potential to in-situ experiment commoning governance.

To CJ the on-site interventions do not necessarily need to remain in the long term, although they reckon this could be nice, it is more important to take into account and stimulate the crucial insights that are anchored in the agency within temporary use. Accordingly, CJ proposed a “phasage” in which these already existing and additional temporary interventions could transit into the envisioned process-oriented creation of a new district. This starts with the creation of public space –like the picnic the commons events initiated- and the perpetuation of the ecological structures – which Josaphat’s pond could represent today.

After this, the following phase would consist of the experimentation of self-built housing and their collective governance. The self-proclaimed transitional use today already hosts light housing structures, yet out of necessity for homeless people and not in the idealized sense of qualitative temporary housing as imagined here by CJ. Furthermore housing within the temporary use of Josaphat –in the form of a concierge- is a tense point of discussion in the negotiations or the pending convention of Josaphat’s temporary use.

The next step envisaged by CJ is an incubator for cooperatives that would look and experiment the creation of work and the establishment of an economy in line with the commons philosophy. This incremental process would allow developing a governance structure that would bit-by-bit learn to deal with the growing complexities and scale of the whole Josaphat project. CJ advocates learning-by-doing experimentation in commons-oriented urban development and governance.

CJ’s vision on temporary use in making city –not very coincidentally- aligns with the ambitions of the Commons Architect.e. The in the transitional embedded aspiration for an altering way of making city might not be shared by all actors of Josaphat, yet I am sensitive to its implicit and explicit presence within our shared commons agency. It resonates in what I have earlier in this chapter described to be the performative nature of commons uAD. Amongst others, it can be traced back in the generally appreciated idea/hope to protect specific zones of Josaphat’s natural environment that make up exceptional biodiversity. Most recently a –very light- appropriation of this transitional aspirations manifested in the by the MSI proposed convention for temporary use. In the May 2018 draft version of the convention, the MSI demands the official temporary use would come with an “accompagnement”. This entails monthly meetings between the MSI and JA to discuss the current use of Josaphat and would support exchange of ideas and reflections considering Josaphat’s planned neighborhood. We are gaining ground. Or more correctly; we might be gaining time.

Our conviction that the temporary can be transitional and support altering ways of making city does not stand alone. Apart from knowing several of my peers at Josaphat support this idea, the reflection and discussion of Aurelie De Smet and I on the Boerenhof strengthen this cause.

Seeing the parallel between the Boerenhof experience, the vision of Commons Josa-

phat and the current practices of commons uAD at Josaphat, the conclusion of De Smet and I (2018, pp. 293-294) in “*How one tree can change the future of a neighbourhood*” finds relevance also for Josaphat and her self-proclaimed transitional use. Based on the three key elements -being transversal collaboration, an incremental approach and a desire-driven program- Aurelie and I propose “tactical urban planning” as a design approach: “(...) *tactical urban planning is an approach that is not oriented towards predefined outcomes, but is rather focussing on processes and actor-coalitions, aiming at realizing long-term desires and connecting local and global issues. (...) to be able to speak of tactical urban planning a phase of experimentation and trying-out should be allowed to start-up in the area after the ending the previous use(s). In this phase, the conventional spatial planning professionals would start to work in co-production with alternative actors, to step by step build up a new future for the area. A future which, because of this way of working, could not only become more innovative but could also count on broader local support and would thus be more likely to be realized in the current complex context.*”

The by De Smet and me proposed approach of tactical urban planning, and with it, the stance to the transitional it entails makes up a design strategy for the Commons Architect.e to support her search for (be)longing.

In the previous sections, I have unraveled some of the patterns of commons uAD. I have discussed the what (00.07.01), how (00.07.02), and where and when (00.07.03) of the practice of the Commons Architect.e. In this section I will try to further define the Arch.e by analyzing my architectural agency on and around Josaphat.

In chapter 00.03 “Feet on the ground” I have identified myself to be at the overlap of



00.07.fig. 20 – Performative intervention by Mathias Verhoene (Spatial Mirror elective course), June 2016.

## 00.07.04 Looking into a mirror

being an architect-researcher, one of the commoners and architect-writer within the doctoral research and design practice. The distinction of my architectural role is artificial as it this is inextricably entangled with the other facets of my agency. Being very much aware that the collision of the architect with the researcher, the commoner, and the writer make the “Arch.e”, how then to research the mere architectural aspect? Analyzing the own practice is a quest in which I want to acknowledge my insider perspective as a way to offer more specific knowledge and objectivity.

To dig deeper into my architectural agency within the commons practice at Josaphat, I have turned to my peers at the field to find hints and guiding. After all, in good habit, I am used to leaning on them and their insights within the co-creation of the commons uAD interventions at Josaphat. This resulted in a series of interviews -rather conversations- that support me in finding my architectural self within the broader context of this research.

For these interviews, I have invited people who have closely worked with me –and still do so- on different fronts of the commons uAD practice. As first, I engaged in conversation with Toha De Brant who works for BRAL. She is an anthropologist and photographer who has a background in urban design. She was my research colleague for the Brussels Incubators living lab, and since the initiation of our collaboration (February 2017) we have been intensively engaging in a shared search to support Josaphat’s combined tactical and strategic adventures. We have bound over our shared professional and personal interest to advocate a sustainable and human-oriented transition for Brussels urban environment. As a tandem, we have been carrying quite a significant share of the coordination and facilitation tasks for Josaph’Aire. I experience Toha’s role and her actions as close to my agency. Likewise, our ideas and ambitions for Josaphat seem to collide. For the interview, I had prepared a list of adjectives that I had derived through the coding of my architectural notebooks. A process that had helped me to search for my architectural “I” in the “we” of our agency. Inspired by the caricaturing of Economic Man and Modern Architect through a series of key adjectives, I explore to “define” the Commons Architect.e in a similar manner. Puzzled by the long list of adjectives I had filtered out, I turned to Toha for a peer review. With her background in anthropology, Toha helped me to sharpen the definition of the many adjectives I had gathered. I could further select and cluster them as she provided new insights through sharing her perspective. A reconstructed liveliness of this experience can be found in REC.2018.01.26 “Talking about my/our approach; valuing what is in the everyday”.

In follow-up, I had asked Maïté Desguin and Anna Schröder to share their perception on my architectural agency. Maïté and Anna both are engaged in the Recup’Kitchen collective and have worked closely with me through this commons project. Maïté teaches French in an international school, and Anna assists a member of the European Parliament and has expertise in the debate on gender equality. Their interest in Josaphat is strongly tied to RK, and their position as nearby residents informs their concern for its planned future.

In conversation with Maïté and Anna, I focus on the co-creation process of RK. I continue to work with the list of adjectives that resulted from the interview with Toha. In a workshop format based on the list of adjectives, I asked Maïté and Anna to describe my

agency within RK. I had structured the exercise around the imagine, scout, construct and care framework through which I describe the kitchen project in chapter 00.04. In this combined workshop and conversation, Maïté and Anna brought up some facets that had been completely overlooked. They suggest to add adjectives such as; “creative”, “promoting” and “improvising”. In addition, the interview also brought up a discussion on the necessity for RK to keep evolving as a project. Anna and Maïté stressed the importance of making and obtaining tangible results to sustain the commons uAD practice. The third interview had been with Marie Vanhamme. She is the project manager of Josaphat for the MSI and has her background in architecture. Over the last four years, we have been meeting several times around the table to discuss Josaphat’s use and planned future. With the on-going negotiations for a convention of temporary use for Josaph’Aire, we have been seeing each other more regularly these last months. Marie provided relevant insight concerning our (Josaph’Aire’s) governance. Topics such a legitimization, decision-making and responsibilities are brought up front in this conversation.

The overall result is a series of conversations that (will) form a mirror. They provide a surface that reflexes and reflects what my role at Josaphat entails. Thriving off the situated knowledges developed at Josaphat, my peers and I research how I act as an architect. Like with a mirror, the image that is provided through these conversations is reformed, subtly mutated and framed in a limited view. My eyes color the picture that is formed. It is my view that defines where I look and what I –want to- see. But it is also the imaginary that defines the image of the self, and thus, this mirror forms the own perception. Performatively, the image that is revealed in the mirror is the one that becomes true as it gets articulated.

It is based on this image, the mirrored reflection of my agency, that I want to clay the persona of common-ing architect.e. The result, however, is not as solid as the generalized description of Modern Architect, nor Participation Architect. By definition the Arch.e is fuzzy, she can bear many faces. Her identification is based on a list of adjectives that I have derived and filtered through coding and feedback of my peers. A process that is currently still on-going. As such, her identity is made up by an open container of adjectives.

In dialogue with Toha, Maïté, Anna, and Marie, the following clusters of adjectives have been filtered and assembled in reaction to the list I had proposed:

- ° Scripting / visualizing / composing / creative
- ° Enthusiastic / active / facilitating / coordinating
- ° Active / improvising / imperfect
- ° Facilitating / coordinating / promoting
- ° Promoting / presenting / communicative / networking / welcoming / inviting
- ° Facilitating / not blaming / attentive
- ° Attentive / caring / relational
- ° Relational / outgoing / convinced / influential
- ° Political/strategic
- ° Absent / stagnating / standing still
- ° Speculative / interpretive / imaginative
- ° Et cetera

This list is incomplete and certainly not flawless, neither is the model of the Arch.e.

These adjectives reveal characteristics that cluster as they are all entangled and stratified. The here registered attributes of the Arch.e are often feminine. They relate to what Ruth Morrow (2007, p. 193) lists as characteristics of a feminized practice: “collective (not always individualistic), listening (not always telling), facilitating (not always controlling), non-hierarchical (not always Hierarchical), fluid (not always fixed) and doubtful (not always Certain)”. In this description the (sometimes) masculine aspects are not discarded as non-existing in a feminized practice. Accordingly, the Arch.e can also long for independence or embrace positivist logic. The Arch.e remains open to the masculine, she is not looking for opposition but aims at a yin and yang balance. This balance is never stable and thus pushes the Arch.e to redefine her agency again and again. Her caricature is paradoxical not to be captured in a generalized figure, the model in itself is fluid and messy. As is Josaphat’s muddy ground from which I clay her figure.

In this identity the Arch.e represents what architecture can be as well, altering from what I have caricatured as Modern Architect’s stance. The Commons Architect.e embodies an attitude in uAD that is relational, kind, caring, influential, facilitating, composing, etc. One that is commons, like the interventions it manifests itself through. Closely related to the everyday this approach thrives off modesty, banality and the existential value of the lived or lebendige. In addition to the patterns discussed earlier in this chapter, the agency of the Arch.e is defined by this open container of clustered adjectives.



00.07.fig. 21 – My relational position in-between the civic agents and the SAF, drawing by Mathieu, February 2016.



REC.2018.01.26 – Talking about my/our approach; valuing what is in the everyday

I meet with Toha at the Bozar, a cultural venue in the center of Brussels. We flop into a chicque red couch at the empty foyer of the music hall. An orchestra is rehearsing and gives a dramatic undertone to our animated, yet earnest conversation.

I have asked Toha to help me dig into my/our way of working at Josaphat. I want to get a better understanding of what exactly it is that I do. I have brought a list of adjectives. They are the result of my on-going coding and categorizing analysis. Rerunning my architectural notebooks, I had started to look out for the particularity of my agency. I realized “I” had gone lost. When meeting with Toha, I am still fully emerged in the process of filtering out my architectural being within our shared agency. I am looking to build up my architectural consistency again.

The research process has brought up a series of adjectives that reveal different ways of working which at the same time also all stick together. For my conversation with Toha I have prepared a list of clustering adjectives and added some of their dictionary definitions. With this base I go and ask Toha help me out with her analytic eye informed by her close involvement in the field and her broader outlook on Brussels and commoning initiatives.

With live classical music playing in the background, Toha and I have a semi-structured conversation reflecting on the key characteristics of our urban practice and the role / attitude / approach of the architect –me- in this on-going process. The list of adjectives will guide the conversation:

Speculative, imaginative

T/ Let’s start with, “speculative”. You know to me it has a negative connotation, it makes me think of buildings that are abandoned and left to waste as developers are waiting for land prices to rise.

H/ Yes but it also means seeing the next step in a game of chess, anticipating what future positions might be. For example, when we were founding Josaph’Aire. You and I approached the nonprofit structure as a tool to gain recognition from the MSI. We speculate on what this nonprofit structure could help us to establish in the future. Both of us, we were looking beyond.

T/ Maybe it is more connected to seeing what is possible, what is at the horizon?

H/ It is thinking in the long term, even in temporary use and ad hoc urban interventions.

T/ Like A might be a dull and constraining structure. Forced even. But it might help us to come together and organize ourselves.

H/ Yes, exactly! I believe both of us see how this nonprofit can contribute to the creation of urban commons.

H/ And then: “imaginative”. To me that is really essential and strongly present.

T/ ... It is good to dream, but on the other hand it demands so much energy. And then often these dreams are scattered. Well not scattered but... Often they are too far off reality.

H/ You know Recup’Kitchen started as an imagination. Now it is there, up and running. I didn’t think we would actually make it. And if I would have been too realistic, I might not even have started it. It was a good thing we were naïve and that we would let

ourselves get carried away by our dream.

T/ But it can be so painful. Like some of the other projects we are dreaming of; a tiny house community and so... Some things are feasible, others not. Will we ever manage to realize an entire neighborhood as an urban commons?

H/ There are many gradations. But imagining remains central to me. In the coding it keeps on coming back to me again and again. Maybe it tells something about my way of working? Maybe it is about triggering a constructive approach?

T/ It is a technique you see popping up everywhere in participatory design processes. Always those post-its to express your ideas and concerns...

H/ Yes, but here the focus is more on the image. It is linked to drawing.

T/ Indeed, you often have a way of presenting that is very visual; using postcards and making pictures.

H/ Yes during a workshop series on the needs and desires of the temporary use for Josaphat, I worked on visualizing the proposals and their underlying commoning ambitions (see 00.03.fig. 10). And then now I can see how certain ideas and images come back. Often these imaginations are in-between a drawing and a collage. They differ radically from an architectural plan.

T/ A plan, it is often perceived as the truth. When something it is put to a plan, it sets the tone for the effective realization of what has been imagined

H/ I question the idea of the architect who knows what is best and then draws up a plan that has to be realized as such. Once the administrative procedure gets through, the construction site gets fenced off and after a couple of years of oblivion, a whole new urban space appears!

T/ The plans for Josaphat are already on the table...

H/ Not really actually, the schemes are but a strategic masterplan. What we see on the renderings won't be what the future neighborhood will look like (see 00.03.fig. 6 and 00.07.fig. 8). But when you see these images depicting simple white cubes with green roofs that are drawn in such a realistic way, people feel shocked and worried. But actually it is only an in-between plan. In the form of a sketch they would be far less threatening. The collage as a technique of imaging is much more welcoming and supporting. There is still some space left for civic imagination rather than fault-finding.

T/ Isn't this also linked to "inviting"; welcoming other images and opportunities for the transition of our urban environment?

Strategic, influential

T/ "Strategic". Why this adjective?

H/ I believe there is always some sort of plan behind my actions. Sometimes it might be not explicit but it is there. Like RK, to me it was not just about creating a kitchen. It was also a way to install facilities on site, to bring in life, to bring people together and to explore commoning in action. I see a lot of long term objectives there. Which then is closely connected to the "speculative".

T/ "Influential".

H/ For such a long time I felt weak in my role as architect. The work we do seems so delicate, most of the results are barely visible. I myself sometimes do not acknowledge this architectural practice.

T/ You have a quite powerful approach though.

H/ Well, I do believe I make a mark. But not in a hard or persistent way I hope. But I cannot prove my impact. We are always a part of a bigger community, also in realizing

the urban interventions.

T/ Yes in such a social environment it is impossible to say one actor has led to one specific result. There are too many other conditions.

H/ And then the question arises: what do I aim to influence? I believe the impact lies more in the processes; maintaining the kindness and speculative nature of our collective work. As an architect I feel troubled to have such a limited physical impact. But maybe I am more influencing or designing the “relational goods” (Manzini, 2015a) that come with the creation of urban commons ?

T/ But there is clearly an impact. Without you it simply wouldn't have been there like it is there today

That remark about weakness, I think it's weird you experience it like that. I would say you move forward, you anticipate.

H/ I think I actually do really know which direction I want to go, but at the same time I easily let myself be influenced. It links back to the “responsive” and the “relational”.

Relational, responsive, attentive, kind, inviting

T/ So, “relational” ...

H/ I've chosen this because I realized that I take on a different attitude or position depending on the people we work with. Our roles shift. For example, since you joined, I act in a different way.

T/ Indeed, a role –as architect or anything other- cannot take place without its relation to others and its environment. Your role exists through these relations. When one of our fellow practitioners takes a position, you and I are obliged to (re)position ourselves. We have a relational attentiveness. Both of us often notice it when someone is a bit absent during discussions. We sense it if the group dynamics are not alright and we also try to act upon it.

H/ Yes, in that sense the relational is strongly connected to being “responsive” and “attentive”.

T/ “Attentive” is linked to “kind”. Both are connected to listening. But in the end, being kind does not have much meaning in the context of trying to define the roles you play...

H/ Kindness is often not credited and that is the point I want to make. We wouldn't relate that well to our fellow practitioners if we would not be that kind and understanding, wouldn't we? It demands an incredible amount of energy. Being kind is associated with weakness, while it is so damn strong.

T/ But sometimes kind is not necessarily positive. In the meeting with the MSI we had just recently, you were too kind. Kindness only works if the other people around you are sufficiently kind to you too.

H/ Yes, I believe all of these adjectives have their double side... But when “kind” is not there... Our last assembly meeting the kindness got lost at a certain point, the debate took such a venomous turn. It feels like part of our role is to watch Josaphat remains a welcoming place.

T/ Again, it is all connected. The “inviting”, the “kind”, the “relational”... you can't untangle them into separate pieces.

Composing, narrating, scripting

T/ “Composing”.

H/ That is a tough one.

T/ The Merriam-Webster dictionary says “to form by putting together”.

H/ It is linked to the idea of constructing a narrative.

T/ But you erased the “narrating” adjective, why?

H/ I do not believe I write a narrative, but there is something about it. It is more like... gathering the narrative?

T/ Maybe it is more assembling the components or building blocks of the narrative? Like constructing a storyline, you can draw it in different ways along certain anchor points.

H/ Yes, I have my way of looking at things; indeed, as I am also researching what we do. But, in line with my own perspective, I do also see a strong collective narrative for us.

T/ I believe we all have that. Everyone has their way of connecting the building blocks. Which brings us back to the relational...

T/ “Scripting”?

H/ I don’t think this is the right word neither. It might be too strong; it disguises some authority as if one person -and one only- scripts a given scenario.

Facilitating, caring

T/ “Caring”.

H/ That’s easy.

T/ Yes, is that so? Caring for... for what, for whom?

H/ There are many layers. I think in the end we all care for our place and see it as a place of belonging.

T/ Are you sure? You personally yes. Like you are cleaning the kitchen and taking care of the garbage. You take care of making newcomers feel welcome. But also socially, you take care of the relations among us and the overall dynamic.

H/ Ha, I enjoyed it when Ivan made his statement that “commoning starts with cleaning the dishes”. I believe caring is the base.

T/ You know what I believe is particular to your role? You pick up these small things; everyday kind of things that you filter out and translate to a higher meaning. That connecting, seeing those things, emphasizing them, that is special.

H/ That didn’t occur to me at all.

T/ Yes it is like you see some key actions. It is a way to define the value of what we are doing. And then to put these up front. Like cleaning the dishes, caring and commoning.

T/ “Facilitating”. Does it belong to the relational and the inviting?

H/ I am not sure. Often the role of the architect in participatory processes is described as the one of a facilitator. I do not want to reduce it to this, but it is part of it for sure like for the Maison des Possibles. I am not building it, but I made up the request for the building permit and went hunting in the Brussels bureaucracy to get all the needed documents. But I also didn’t do that just on my own.

T/ It is connected to the “influential”. But you can look at it in many other ways. You could say it is “caring”, as you wanted to help with the realization of the Maison. But it is also an “attentive” gesture because you felt we were getting stuck there...

H/ Yes, that is true. These adjectives are no distinct concepts. They are layered and heavily entangled. It is like a whole deal of parts at once.

T/ And it is all related and intertwined with the actions on the field.

H/ I believe that is the clue. It’s not like each adjective represents a role. No, all together in their multiplicity they stand for an attitude / an approach.

T/ It is the multiplicity of different and entangled adjectives. It will be essential to bring out the entanglement and stratification of these adjectives.

We are sitting around the dining table in Maïté’s home. She serves Anna and I a cup of tea while her little daughter is curiously circling around us. I have brought some biscuits together with a stack of cards on which I have written the adjectives Toha, and I have discussed earlier in January. Today it is Anna and Maïté that will help me to figure out what my agency consists of, more particularly for RK.

Building on to the conversation with Toha, I adjusted my “selection” of adjectives. New attributes had come up, and others were redefined or dismissed from the table –or rather the red velvet couch that had hosted our conversation. With a focus on RK, I had prepared a series of cards that list the remaining adjectives. At the back of the cards, I provided brief clarifications: dictionary definitions or descriptions that came out the previous conversation.

It is a Saturday morning; we are all willing to take it slow. We start late, we brief each other on the most recent advances of RK and amicably chat about life. Our coffee klatch is light-hearted but also reveals how we bound over a search for meaning and belonging in life.

Our doubts, dreams, expectations... to me, it is all very connected to our shared agency in RK. The three of us do well within the scheme of our society. We are aware we live privileged lives, but yet we are at the outlook. We are all searching for something different. A “something” that found a common expression in our sustainable kitchen; creating bounds and supporting an altered approach to food and the use of public space. We share an ambition to act –even though small. And in this exploration, we have all had our little desperations. We still keep going one way or another; for the people, we care about, for our kitchen, for each other. It is how we stand in life. It is how I hope I stand in the field of urban architectural design.

I kick off the workshop by giving a brief account of my research.

H/ So through Josaphat, I look how I work as an architect. For me, it is very difficult to see what I exactly do. I am part of a community; I didn’t make the kitchen on my own. You and many others were a crucial part in that. So I would like to ask you to describe what you see to be my specific role, my way of working within RK. I have a list of adjectives, and I would ask you to bring up comment on them and add on to it from your personal experience.

I would like you to consider four phases throughout the creation process of RK. The “imagine”, “scout”, “construct” and “care” . If you like you can have a look at the adjectives that are already there.

M/ (To Anna:) You were there first, I have arrived at this phase. (She points at the post-it that says “scout”).

A/ I remember when I joined, you (Hanne) already had the idea set. We met at the “fric-ke”, you and some more people were shooting a film. I just was there, and you asked if I had some time so I joined making the video for the crowdfunding.

M/ So we both were not there at the “imagine” phase.

A/But I would say for that phase: “creative”. You were brainstorming the idea, what it could mean to have a kitchen.

M/ I also remember there was also a lot of positive energy. Like you would say: “Oh come it will be nice, just join!”. Something very natural and easy.





ciations in Brussels. You would just contact them, imagine partnerships...

A/ In an adjective that would be “contacting” or “initiating contacts”? “Networking”.

H/ And then now today, with RK’s team being on low energy. Maybe you see things that you feel are missing now in this phase of caring? Perhaps some things are not present anymore?

A/ You have been active, also when you were in Turin for some months. But for RK to work you need to be physically present. So maybe “absent” would be an adjective then. If you are not there, it does not happen. It is not only words or online work.

M/ But last year when you were in Turin, I still had the feeling the rest of us had sufficient energy. So I didn’t consider it problematic then.

A/ Yes maybe you are more absent this year, now you are so occupied with your thesis. Although you are there, and even still active... But then most of your energy goes to Josaph’Aire now. I am not sure actually if in general, you are less active now.

M/ I believe we all together lost our energy a bit. And then when you want to do something, all responsibilities come to you, which makes you feel all the pressure.

A/ Maybe it is because now we don’t have a plan. In German, we say “dahin plitschen.” Things are going, but not really.

M/ We do not have a real direction, nor a big project now.

H/ Maybe it is a lack of decisiveness?

A/ RK has not evolved anymore since last year. It might have been necessary to get the roulotte moving, or to make the “bakfiets” (cargo bike) we are dreaming of... We don’t have this spill and excitement of developing something.

M/ It is like everyday business. It might have gotten a bit boring.

A/ Yes there is a lack of being active, of having dedication. A lack of progress? “Stagnating”.

M/ This stagnating is connected to a lack of energy or moving forward that is also troubling the JL.

A/ That is true as well, RK is not an entity standing on its own. In general at Josaphat the last time there is some negativism, less activism...

M/ Yes I felt that too. And also, you get blamed for it when you are not sufficiently present. Like to me the whole strategic debate around Josaphat, it is not my interest. And then you get told it is not fair that you are not that involved... it makes me feel guilty that I am not being active enough. But my engagement for RK is already something I add up to my day job. So when being blamed, I feel bad, and I don’t want to come to Josaphat anymore. So it becomes this negative circle. But this might be happening at Josaphat; we had never had it within RK! That is maybe something you also brought. There is not that judging that makes you feel guilty.

A/ We let people go without blaming them. We don’t demand dedication, but people are dedicated to the project. And as such we all do not want to let go. Like all three of us, we have been less active at a certain moment, and that is okay.

But Maïté you are right when you say this sense of stagnation is connected to the general developments on the “friche” (wasteland). With the political negotiations for the convention of temporary use, the energy for the whole thing got a bit weird, and this also impacts on RK. RK is political, considering food waste and bringing people together. But now even more. It is increasingly becoming a fight against something, like the destruction of the friche.

I think we missed to evolve. Just the interior construction of Recup’Kitchen had brought

so much energy. But then even the construction of the kitchen did not evolve far enough. We didn't have a plan for that.

A/ Another important element is "improvising".

M/Yeah! (laughter) It was always better when we improvised. You also let us do that. You were also... "faire confiance dans ce qui arrivera" (having faith in what would happen).

A/ RK is in a way the opposite of perfection. But it worked for a certain time, and for certain people. RK is not perfect but can do much with little. It can do something with ideas. You initiate something, invest a lot of energy for a short amount of time. And then you see an immediate result. Like for the crowdfunding, you have a deadline, and then the next step comes. That is easy. But like this now (pointing at the "care" post-it) this...

M/ That is the hardest. To maintain and evolve from there.

Throughout the conversation, I have noted down the suggested adjectives and spread them according to the four phases we have discussed. To conclude I ask Maïté and Anna to map their adjectives together with those from Toha and me.

After they have finished, I ask if there are some adjectives that they consider to be particular to my role. Maïté points out the "facilitating" one. Anna agrees and moves her hand over the cluster of "facilitating", "coordinating" and "communicating".

A/ You have been the chef cook of the whole thing. But that requires people around you that are dedicated to standing in the kitchen even though you are not the one who cooks for RK.

M/ Ha, yes cooking is not one of your adjectives.

A/ Your creativity is not in preparing the food. The cooking is more the part of other like Maïté.

## REC.2018.11.08 – The "potager des doctorants"

I meet Marie Vanhamme who works for the MSI (the Brussels Capital Region's Development Cooperation). She is the project manager of the Josaphat development. She welcomes me in the office of the MSI where we get installed in the kitchen area. As a good host, Marie offers me coffee while I sit down and lay out the cards with adjectives that I have accumulated from the interview sessions with Toha, and Anna and Maïté. We go and sit face to face along the long kitchen table.

After the usual polite search for a common language, we dive straight into the conversation. I start by explaining the direction I took with my thesis. I position the importance of Josaphat as being both symbolic and symptomatic of the contemporary uAD scene in Brussels. I introduce Marie to my Modern Architect and Participation Architect and then ask her to help me define the architectural agency that is taking place in the self-proclaimed transitory use of Josaphat. I stress I am particularly interested in how she, as the involved top-down actor, perceives our work. Moreover, Marie is an architect and I as such aim to more focus on this angle within this conversation.

The interview needs to be contextualized in November 2018, more or less a month after Josaph'Aire and the MSI succeeded to agree over a convention for temporary use.

Marie chooses first to overlook the clusters of adjectives that I have spread out on the table. I suggest her to order them according to their relevance to how she perceives my agency. When I encourage her to be honest and critical she laughingly replies:

M/ You know me, I won't hold back.

The tone is set. Marie points out the stack that clusters the adjectives of “kind”, “caring” and “relational”.

M/ I would choose these as the most representative for you (singular). These –the one with “political” and “strategic”- I believe are not that relevant to your (plural) work. The caring and kind represent the generous way of working you have. A trust in people, taking care of them. This also at the same time imposes a limit when other people do not act accordingly. It requires something that makes other people respect and follow this attitude. I would not say “being authoritarian”, but you need something that imposes regulations. Maybe some procedures, who demand the same kindness from others and that require people to sit together and discuss things to safeguard the project, to be sure it continues in the right direction. This is something that is not there but which is necessary. To me, this is the most crucial.

I write down “not demanding respect”.

M/ Then this package –“inviting”, “promoting”, “presenting”- the whole range concerning communication is also accurate. You (singular) have definitely worked on that. And I also believe it is this that makes that you (plural), in case of conflicts, manage to get out.

And then this stack –“facilitating” and “coordinating”- certainly is present as well, but I perceive it less from my outsider perspective. Then, the cluster of “communicative”, “promoting”, “presenting”, “welcoming”, “networking” and “inviting” I would put together with “active” and “enthusiastic”. I would also include “composing”, “scripting”, “visualizing” and “creative”. They are all the same. I believe that in the work you do, the communication is part of the action. That is why I think these two should be positioned close to each other.

This –“improvising” and “not perfect”- it seems this is a shame, yet it is evident in a way. A practice like yours cannot be too organized, nor can it be perfect. If you’re not capable of improvising and to re-orient, it does not make sense to be active in this field. I believe the “organized” part comes from the institutions. You see it is a point of friction. We as the MSI we cannot afford to improvise, nor to be imperfect. Our work, in contrast to what you do, needs to be accounted for by the general public.

H/ Is this because of your status as public actor?

M/ Yes, exactly. Our masterplan for Josaphat has to pass a public inquiry, and people are there to reply and tell us what they want and don’t want for this or that reason. We are in a situation in which our work is one that is legitimate and necessary as part of our democratic system. Your practice is internally questioned, yet is not part of an external discussion.

I note “legitimacy issue”.

In relation to that the “speculative”, “interpretative” and “imaginative” is also relevant. You are not just hands-on agents. When I use the expression of “des potagistes des doctorants” (the doctoral vegetable gardeners), it is precisely this that I want to address. This can be felt in the way you (plural) operate. There is a presence of a group of people who desire to have on-site experience, yet they start from a certain theory. It is not like a group of common people. There is an important difference in what you look for, in how you act. This makes that your community has a significant amount of people in it that are “des potagistes des doctorants”.

H/ I can’t deny being a “doctorant”, but...

M/ Yes certainly, there is you, but also Philippe (Commons Josaphat), then there is Mathieu (Jardin Latinis) who is also a theorist or the person of the Forum... You are an “ensemble” of intellectuals of which everyone has their background. And this also implies a limit. Because there are people that I cross at Josaphat, who do not have this background and for whom this theoretical layer complicates things. They are just there to take care of their garden. And in a way, they are being used. Well, I don’t like to say “used” because that sounds negative. But in a way, they are “used” to contribute to your theoretical work.

H/ Well, yes but it goes in two directions.

M/ Yes of course. Luckily they are there to maintain the garden.

M/ And then here the “political” and “strategic” that I would put together with “influential”, “outgoing” and “convinced”... I think this is never really clear. We -from our position as a public actor- we never know if what you (plural) are saying is sincere or if there is a hidden agenda. You see, I believe among you some people really have the goal to block the development plans for Josaphat. Others then aim to improve it. And so we can work with the latter but have no interest to work together with the others. And if this is not clear well... There are people that project things on Josaphat which for us are fundamentally unacceptable. It is not compatible with the will of the public government to reply to a quantitative need for housing. We can work with people that want to improve the project, and I also believe this has happened thanks to you (plural).

H/ How do you see we improved the project?

M/ Well through the discussion you have brought. We have learned a lot from the experience of having temporary users. We understand better what the limits are, which kind of actors or more suited for which type of actions. These are things we are taking into account as we are preparing the assignment for the official transitory use of Josaphat. And then also you (plural) have evolved. This is also important, both for you as for us.

I believe where we are today, your (plural) open-mindedness and non-judgmental attitude, now has resulted in a sort of fiction. The fact you accept everyone has now shown to be incompatible with other elements. You see the “Maison des Possibles” the moment it gets squatted, “c’est plus possible”... You are missing a legitimization framework (“armature”). This makes everything is legitimate, also including that what is incompatible with your vision. But then things mature, and you’ll get there.

And the political aspect then. It connects back to the legitimization issue. Each of you builds their legitimization through their specific transitory use project (Maison des Possibles, garden, ....) and then these need to come together. And from there on you need to look for your minimal common denominator. Something is missing; something – I don’t know what- that would make that everyone’s ideology would cause space to set up a collective project. Which in a way is in progress through the creation of JosaphAire. But it is still not clear. Values, legitimacy, and collective strategy; to me, it are those three elements that are not sufficiently clearly articulated.

H/ And then for you as an architect, are there certain adjectives that strike you as more “architectural”? Are there certain aspects that more reflect the approach, way of thinking of an architect?

M/ I think you can feel that very strongly when you enter the Josaphat site, you as intellectuals are more interested in the poetic and aesthetic aspects of what is being constructed. There is a certain aesthetic that is not like that by accident.

H/ Could you better describe that?

M/ Well, for example, the “geode” (referring to the Forum). I cannot accept it, yet at the same time, it is a beautiful structure. Just for that reason, I don’t want to demolish it. This is a typical architectural attitude. So if I then have to explain to the president of the MSI who is a jurist that I would like to keep it on Josaphat, how do I get that explained? So I find other ways to motivate that decision.

Architecture is a communication tool. So this whole stack of adjectives here, linked to “communicative”, but also this one of “caring”, these are very closely and directly connected to the presence of architects, us (MSI) included he.

H/ Yes and then it links to communicating and acting in space.

M/ It also relates to how we as architects can better communicate among us because we share a common language there. So when interventions are constructed in a comprehensible architectural way, using archetypes like the shape of a house, we share this language.

H/ Which is then different from other structures like the fridge?

M/ But watch out, the fridge is genius in its way. When there was no airing, it was too dangerous, so impossible for us to accept it. But then a window had been installed, just brilliant. You see this is this capacity to evolve. So then I could go to our chief and tell him; it is not as dangerous now we don’t need to rush its demolition anymore. But so it is this aesthetic, one that a lot of people can easily understand, which for us makes it difficult to take it down. It’s a bit hippy, and people relate to it, are willing to defend it.

H/ Interesting, because we sometimes get the remark we should make it more beautiful. For a lot of people the aesthetics of shipping pallets and bricolage... it is not so appreciated.

M/ Yes there is a difference between the aesthetics of caretaking and the one related to pallets. And this caretaking is very crucial. The place needs to be sufficiently clean and well maintained. And there the caring also comes back in.

H/ As the last question then, I am exploring the techniques that we implement. Are there any ways of working you see we implement and you believe might be relevant for public planning organizations such as the MSI or Perspective?

M/ Well there is a time issue that needs to be resolved. It takes you six months to reply to us. And we have a certain timing we need to respect. So in a way, certain constraints are necessary so you would become more efficient. So I believe you are in need to have some more clear procedures. Because now you lack this internal legitimization and you act according to like how you feel things. This takes a lot of time, and this is incompatible with our timing that is administrative, legislative, and political. It is not a critique at your address, but it is a journey, it takes time.

H/ And are there approaches we use that you could see would be useful to adopt in the MSI? Like for example the fact we host meetings on-site at Josaphat?

M/ Yes certainly. I have proposed to have our monthly meetings to take place on-site. I believe it contributes to a certain atmosphere. Also sometimes distance is necessary too. For example the meetings concerning the negotiation of the convention, I believe it is better to have those hosted in our office. Because on-site you have an idea of a “rapport de force” which is incorrect. Then the internal disagreements emerge, and you take less into account that other people are outside of this. Because you are anchored there, you don’t have this distance. At a certain point, there is this reality –that we are the owners of the Josaphat site and not you- which you need to be confronted with.

H/ So what do you think we can achieve now as the convention has been signed?

M/ Well I am naturally rather optimistic. If this will work, it can be great. I hope it will work because it fits my personal and political project. It is related to the matter of space, the “préconfiguration” of the future district, to associate more people to the urban development project... But this is my point of view as a person, not as part of the institution though. So I would like it to work. On the other hand, I am naïve neither. For some, it is also the objective to reorganize society or our institution. So it will be necessary to find a common space of mutual respect. Maybe it is going to work, and maybe we will enter again in situation of conflict. It is clear that you took on a “gentlemen agreement” yet I can also feel that under this surface there is a certain antagonism. And that is not necessarily bad. Now it is working. We’ll see for the future.

H/ Then at a certain point you mentioned we help to improve the planned project. How exactly?

M/ Well first of all with you I mean you as users of the site but also the neighbors gathered in the “Comité de site Josaphat”. There are also the naturalists that –I don’t know in which measure yet- but they can certainly help to develop the planning and organization of the biodiversity on the slopes. I don’t know if we will manage to find a way to work together or if they would rather be reactive and take up the standpoint that the site should be conserved as nature zone. And then, for example, the experience of the small lake. This has triggered an awareness and a change, knowing wild ducks are staying there now, frogs, etcetera.

It is rather that there are certain things that for us are part of a masterplan process, yet that for people is a matter of their reality. So through their action, we can manage to take these into account.

## REC.2016.06&2018.06 Reflections from the Spatial Mirror elective course

I had the pleasure to teach an elective course (5ECTS) in the master education at our Faculty of Architecture in the second semester of 2015-2016 and 2017-2018. In the design atelier consisting out of around ten students, I –with the support of Dag Boutsen and Johan Verbeke- have focused on the exploration of per-formative design interventions for Josaphat. In the “Spatial Mirror” elective course the students and I explored how to work with on-site realities, develop a personal vision on Brussels uAD and act according to it. At the closure of the semester, I have asked my students to reflect on their agency and their position. Collectively exploring their reflexes and reflections on and around Josaphat, the Spatial Mirror also became a surface at which to review my positioning and agency.

In 2016 Marisa Borabo made the following concluding reflecting considering her on-site intervention to contribute to digging the lake of the Jardin Latinis: *“After I posted a selfie of team Borabo digging a pond. People started asking: ‘Why are you digging a pond?’, ‘What is the use of it?’, ‘Why is papa Santos there’. Even my dad was wondering if I was losing my mind. So I’ll explain everything.”*

*“It all started on Sunday 28th of February. Mathieu invited us to come and join him at a weekly meeting with the people involved on the site. What happened was not what we had in mind. They started working, and because we didn’t want to feel useless, we decided to*



*dig the pond, while digging we realized, we were doing an intervention, at that moment. By bounding, by being there, by helping, and by giving something to the community. It doesn't have to be big; I believe that a small action can lead to a big impact."*

*"For strangers, it's just a pond. For Commons Josaphat, it's the next step. For me, it's a way to make the aspect of a silence escape bigger. The pond makes the terrain less swampy, so it makes it more accessible. It may be naive, but I don't see a site filled with buildings in the near future. I see the nature taking the upper-hand. A place where people come to escape the big city life."*

Following my on-going research considering adjectives that could describe my attitude as an architect, I had asked some of my students to position themselves by listing five adjectives that would describe their architectural agency.

Mayra Morales describes herself as empathic: *"Understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner."*

Kriti Goswami highlights her dramatic side: *"Intending or intended to create an effect; theatrical. The power of architecture is in the type of effects it has on the people, society, place, and space. But the effects need to be bold enough, or dramatic enough to act as a statement."*

Stephanie Hermant –being a student in anthropology that nevertheless joined the elective course in architecture- brings up the characteristic of being slow: *"Not rapid in operation or effect. It speaks of resistance to the contemporary obsession with speed. Slowness opens up other timeframes and dimensions that are non-linear but ever recurrent time that works for you. It conjures a sense of lushness, spaciousness and simmering potentiality. Slow is the pace of sustainable change that is rooted in the everyday practices of ordinary people. Slow is the way of knowing something from the inside."*

Bojana acknowledges her poetic attitude: *"Having an imaginative or sensitively emotional style of expression; expressive, figurative, symbolic. With every project I want to tell something; explore; find (new) meanings. I am always searching for depth, layers, and interrelations of things. That's why I find inspiration and understanding in different disciplines: art, history, politics, activism..."*

REC.2018.07.13 Notebook reflection: it is not a fairy tale

While rewriting this chapter on the "Commons Architect.e", I keep on reflecting on the doctoral research and design practice in my architectural notebooks. A process that helps me to blend in the still emerging insights in this written account. In July, after a helpful feedback session with Nel Janssens, I feel the need to reflect the less pleasant experiences I have encountered throughout my engagement in the commons uAD at Josaphat.

I want to acknowledge I have made mistakes and from time to time I still feel to be failing. I have found my resilience, and as a researcher I even experience pleasure in learning from my mistakes.

In general, I am sincerely enthusiast about our work, and with a naïve curiosity and tolerance, I have learned to appreciate and accept most of the challenges that cross our

journey. I hope my informed optimism simmers through this written account and can also make you as a reader enthusiast. After all, it is my sincere ambition to make people aware and motivate them about what I have here defined as an altering architectural practice embodied by the persona of the Commons Architect.e.

But it would be unfair to hide or deny my moments of desperation, of unbearable stress, of nausea. I could have written as many reconstructed stories (REC) that narrate uncomfortable or bluntly worrisome lived experiences at Josaphat.

There are multiple moments in which I have been (in)directly criticized and had to bear in- and explicit insults. I had to witness commoners to shamelessly disrespect others or feel (un)rightfully disrespected. I noticed how some of us got so carried away in our noble quest to construct our idealized urban environment –so convinced of their discourse- their very nearby peers came to stand in their way. Sometimes visiting Josaphat felt more like entering a minefield.

At occasions, I felt pure resent on my way there. Sometimes it became a sacrifice to spend another weekend day or evening at Josaphat to go and facilitate what I knew would be another heated and conflictual discussion. Or maybe another session of hearing my fellow agents nagging about all those things that are going wrong.

My ambition to practice the tolerance, openness, and sense of equality we preach, has pushed me in the uncomfortable position to swallow sexist remarks from drunk visitors and even threatening reclamations at my address.

I regularly have ended up in an unpleasant mediating position. I am being lectured by people from the MSI, to endure the angry responses of my fellow commoners. Don't shoot the messenger they say. And as we agree to no longer build any constructions at Josaphat as long as we negotiate the convention with the MSI, new structures pop up like mushrooms. Don't act like the police then. It is at my address that the MSI's threatening letter arrives.

In all our idealism, personal ethical dilemmas do not remain astray. What do you do when someone you consider to be a friend decides to move into your collectively built house, knowing tolerating this residency might jeopardize everything we had realized so far? What do you do when one of the Josaphat structures –the Forum- is being menaced with eviction and you know the community might be willing to fight at its defense while its creators have turned their back on us? Find the most proper answer there.

Again and again, I had to re-organize conversations and meetings, renegotiate already made decisions and redo adaptations as our community has its mood swings; people change their mind or newcomers enter in with their discourse. I have learned to not expect much gratitude for what is often invisible work. Commoning can be harsh.

I have cried, I have been hurt and felt wounded. Some days I would wake up soaking in sweat out of distress. So many times I felt entirely drained of all my energy. The urge to fight to not loose nor let go is pressing. What can upset you, matters to you. That is life. And Josaphat and its commons uAD practice to me are exactly that. It is the "lebendige". I have cared. I still care. And I still firmly believe the community at Josaphat cares to. In the end, I guess I simply (be)long there.

## 00.07.05 Discussion: a commons-oriented alternative

In this written account of the doctoral research and design practice, I reflect on the learnings from its de-sign-based participatory action research situated at Josaphat ground. In chapter 00.05 “A field of tension” I have claimed Josaphat is symbolic for Brussels’ contemporary uAD as both civic and public agents look for innovation in this field. In this symbolic position, Josaphat also appears to be symptomatic for lack of transparency and civic participation as well as a sensed fear that contemporary urban development is at the cost of the quality of life in the urban environment. To further unravel what it is that is going wrong; I have welcomed the caricature of “Economic Man” (Marçal, 2016; Raworth, 2017). He has supported me to model the generalized figure of “Modern Architect”, whose obsession for positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance and self-interest I have used to address certain matters of concern.

Not at least there is the fear that Modern Architect’s urban development plans might threaten the quality of life, which combines with the frustration that is evoked by an experienced lack of transparency. Modern Architect’s positivist logic embodies an obsession for an objective and rational approach based on technical authority and leading to functionalist splintering. His hung for predictability represents the hunger to stay in control and as such postpone citizen involvement while putting confidence in private developers to bring efficient and secure results. The latter is by Saskia Sassen (2016) discussed to risk de-urbanization. Modern Architect’s independence then illustrates how uAD tends to be no more than generic developments without a soul (De Sloover, 2017). His dominance then reveals his imposed authority as well as the undervaluing of the natural environment. His self-interest might not be as strong as the one of Economic Man, yet it represents the pressure to quickly show off impressive results and the tendency to approach urban areas as investments. At Josaphat, the development might be for the public interest, yet it supports the on-going com-modification process of the urban environment.

Josaphat might illustrate some things are going, though the agency of her self-proclaimed transitional uses and the visioning of Commons Josaphat explore altering ways of city making and as such build-up to Josaphat’s promising air. Accordingly in chapter 00.06 “A turning point?” I have formed the character of “Participation Architect” to support me in contextualizing the architectural agency that plays around Josaphat. This figure bears the promise to provide a hero for my quest in search of an altering uAD practice. As we know Participation Architect from his counter position to Modern Architect, he turns out to have become outdated compared to the unfolding participatory design field he is tied to. He might gain from a digital update, as well as he would benefit from a (feminized) altering stance to the architectural. Looking to move beyond “participation” in itself the commons movement reveals a relevant pathway. Enters the silhouette of “commoning architect.” The potential of this altering model hangs in Josaphat’s air. Though, feet on Josaphat’s ground, I reckon that the architectural agency that plays out there has not sufficiently matured to make up such an ambitious altering model. However, there might be interesting learnings to obtain from Josaphat’s ground. Claying the model of the “Commons Architect.e” from Josaphat’s muddy land I look for an altering architectural attitude in her micro-interventions that I in chapter 00.04 “House-garden-and-kitchen stories” have claimed to entail urban commons. I have described

and narrated three-plus-one projects that play out at Josaphat's ground. The Maison des Possibles, Jardin Latinis, and Recup'Kitchen build up a house-garden-and-kitchen tripartite that is complemented by the essential and invisible commoning layer represented by the Josaph'Aire non-profit. Relating to the Dutch "huis-tuin-en-keuken" expression I have introduced the concept of "commons architecture" that embraces the simplicity, banality but also beauty of the everyday. The notion of commons furthermore flirts with the concept of the (urban) commons, and as such represents the crucial commoning represented most strongly by Josaph'Aire and Commons Josaphat.

In this chapter, I have looked to bring out the emergent themes of the commons uAD practice through the persona of the Commons Architect.e –Arch.e for the friends. Although I want to demonstrate she can be embodied by many others that act on Josaphat's muddy land, I have chosen to clay her according to my architectural agency. For this, I could turn to the situated knowledges that I have built throughout this doctoral research and design practice. As described in chapter 00.03 "Feet on the ground", the implementation of a design-based participatory action research method led to lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing. To make these situated knowledges explicit – and as such grasp the architectural agency within the commons uAD practice- I have run through the auto-ethnographic notes that have kept in the architectural notebooks. Through iterative processes of coding and categorizing I could both unravel some of the patterns of the commons practice as well as it supported me in assembling a list of adjectives that can define the attitude of the Arch.e. For the latter I have received significant help from my peers through some interviews. In the previous sections of this chapter I have discussed patterns and adjectives to define the altering stance of the Arch.e. In doing so, I have interwoven the learnings from the coding processes with insights from literature review that has supported me in finding and building up the concepts that reveal the architectural agency within the commons practice at Josaphat.

#### a. Finding Commons Architect.e

Finding out who the Arch.e is / what my agency as architect consists of, is a slippery endeavor. It is tricky to try to untangle my identity as architect from its co-habiting roles as researcher, commoner and writer and even more to research the self that is so strongly embedded in a collective work. The Arch.e as such is the distorted reflection –as when looking into a mirror- of my architectural self. She is not me, but she is the image my fellow agents, and I form of my architectural being.

As altering model to Modern Architect, who can be captured in a clear-cut and generalized framework, the Arch.e is ambiguous in nature. Her existential being is messy and not easy to simplify or label as she advocates nuancing. Moreover, her identity is strongly made up by a "relational" awareness. Additionally –learning from Participation Architect's contemporary shortcoming- she does not want to make up her identity in juxtaposition to Modern Architect. Nor does she believe her architectural attitude will be the heroic *deus ex machina* that will solve everything.

In an attempt to define the agency of my Commons Architect.e, I have tried to describe her through a series of adjectives:

- ° Scripting / visualizing / composing / creative
- ° Enthusiastic / active / facilitating / coordinating

- Active / improvising / imperfect
- Facilitating / coordinating / promoting
- Promoting / presenting / communicative / networking / welcoming / inviting
- Facilitating / not blaming / attentive
- Attentive / caring / relational
- Relational / outgoing / convinced / influential
- Political/strategic
- Absent / stagnating / standing still
- Speculative / interpretive / imaginative
- Etcetera

The Arch.e embodies an open container of characteristics that sometimes can be contradictory. Mainly her attributes are connected to what is traditionally considered as feminine and show to stand close to the at-tributes Morrow (2007) lists to summarize a feminized practice. In this characterization, the feminized practice does not repress those aspects that are more traditionally associated with the masculine. The masculine is an inherent part of the feminine too, albeit not as strong.

To draw out the Arch.e's rough outline, I have asked my peers to help me unravel and questions the range of clustering adjective I have been gathering; this is a process that –like the Arch.e herself- is still “under construction”. This has been combined with a reflection on the patterns I find to make up the commons uAD practice at Josaphat; looking into the what, how, and where and when of it. In these patterns, I can read traces of the Arch.e's attitudes as I have –so far- defined it through an open container of adjectives. By discussing these adjectives and patterns more closely together, I hope to contribute to a better understanding and articulation of who the Arch.e is / can be.

The what that identifies the practice of the Arch.e consists of imaginations, a performative nature, the *lebendige*, and its aesthetics. The first, the imaginations, reflect an attitude that can be marked as “visualizing”, “creative” and “welcoming” as the imaginings are open, unfinished, leave spaces for adaptations and are not overly sleek. They entail an “imperfectness” that is strengthened by the aesthetics of hand drawing, collage techniques, and an overall sketchy style. The “speculative” and “imaginative” are represented in the long term orientation and a visionary underlay of the commons imaginations. Moreover they reveal a “composing” and “scripting” agency while the carefully incorporated details stress the “relational” and “attentive” immersed positioning of the Arch.e. To conclude, the imaginations support the Arch.e's “presenting”, “promoting” and “communicating” skills through their simple visual language that moves away from complex jargon that is employed by Modern Architect.

The performative nature and its ambition to generate new realities, then reveal the “speculative”, “compos-ing” and “imaginative” stance embedded in the commons architectural interventions at Josaphat. Furthermore the different scales, spaces, narratives and events that are articulated through the performative echo with the “political” and “strategic” behavior of the Arch.e. These attributes also find expression in the combined efforts of the Arch.e and her fellow commoners –users- to get “to the streets” (Gadanhó, 2011) and manifest their relational values. In this activism, the “outgoing”, “active”, “presenting” and “promoting” nature of the Arch.e fit as well. The openness, ambiguity, uncertainty, and imprecision of the performative illustrate the “improvising” and “imperfectness” that is to be found in the commons architectural attitude.

The lebendige (Leitner, 2015) then has a significant relation to the cluster of adjectives that gathers the “relational”, “responsive”, “kind”, “inviting” and “welcoming” characteristics. In valuing the everydayness, its simplicity, and the pleasures to be found in the basics of nature, the Arch.e embraces fun and cosines as parts of her practice. To be able to give something back to the communities that co-create the commons architecture, the Arch.e very consciously appreciates and invests in the conviviality and serenity at Josaphat. Her “caring” attitude then finds expression in the reproductive; the dedication spent to maintain and organize the everyday running of the practice as well as in the mindfulness of valuing the liveliness. To take part in this lebendige requires a “presence” that is currently lacking.

Subsequent the aesthetics of the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions and their underlying commoning reflect a “creativity” that manifests in the use of recuperated materials and the palesthetics (Pak & Scheerlinck, 2015) with their adhocism, activism, adaptivity, temporality, and incompleteness. Elements that echo the imperfection of the commons uAD as it entails doing the best with what is at hand, trial, and error, and pragmatism. The relational, responsive and attentive of the Arch.e then can be found in recognition of aesthetics as experience, in the care spend to respect the natural, and the way the materiality expresses the relational values underlying them. Composing and scripting come with reading the atmosphere that the aesthetics breath, the assembling of the micro-interventions and seeing the whole and coherence in their organic mishmash.

The patterns considering how the commons uAD practice manifests itself comprise architecting, wandering for infrastructuring, commoning governance and finding funding. Architecting adds on a focus on the Arch.e’s entangled position that is articulated through the adjective of the “relational”, which clusters with “responsiveness” and “attentiveness”. Furthermore, this “relational” entanglement also reveals the “networking” that reaches beyond Josaphat’s perimeter. In the pattern of architecting the strong relational tie of the Arch.e combines with a process-oriented approach. The Commons Architect.e in this is “enthusiastic”, “active”, “facilitating” and “coordinating”, yet the incremental also entails “slowness” and risks “stagnation”. Looking at architecture as a verb requires an “active” and “improvising” to “take from where they come from, to affect where they are going” (Bengtsson et al., 2016). This process of finding direction is supported by a “strategic”, “political” and “influential” agency.

Wandering for infrastructuring with its multi-layered openness, future-oriented incompleteness and strategic dialogue respectively echo the “improvising”, “imperfect” and “political” positioning of the Arch.e. Her “outgoing” attitude helps to dream wild, chase after socio-material resources and accordingly help to build capital. Letting go of control, adaptivity and embracing a plurality of values highlight the “inviting” and “welcoming”. The need to re-energize the rather unstructured course of the commons design process and the serendipity that comes with it, reveal the “imperfectness” as well as the “confidence” and “creativity” that are necessary to bear through a wandering design process.

The Arch.e aims to support a commoning governance through her “caring”, “facilitating”, and “coordinating” actions. This is the cluster of adjectives which Maïté and Anna have highlighted as being particular to my architectural agency within the Recup’Kitchen project. The awareness on the democratization aspect of commoning addresses the “political” side of the Arch.e and in addition reveals that a commoning governance combines a “strategic”, but also as “tactical” enactment. In order to maintain the bal-



ance on the tight-rope spanned between legitimacy and efficiency the Arch.e can lean on her “attentive”, “relational”, “responsive” and “sensitive” characteristics, being well aware these are “imperfect”, which demands to re-balance. To support the community in sharing responsibilities and stewardship, “composing” and spreading “enthusiasm” are equally relevant.

The challenge of finding funding then first and foremost recognizes that the search for capital extends the merely financial. Looking for funding often comes hand in hand with social innovation. Crowdfunding, recuperating materials, obtaining subsidies and the like required to be “communicative”, “promoting” and “presenting” as well it demands to “compose” a solid conception from the building blocks that are there. The struggle to build both legitimacy and autonomy in the process of gaining funding is by the Arch.e tackled through a “relational” and “responsive” attitude. “Creativity” and “improvising” then prove to be useful asset in the endeavor to mix and match of funding schemes, which can help to obtain a stronger resilience. To conclude, the wandering pattern makes the Commons Architect.e acknowledge her practice is existentially “imperfect” and dependent on its acquired “networking”.

The where and when in which the commons uAD practice situates itself finds patterns in its sites of actions and the transitional. The seven atmospheres of the sites of action are in reality one intractable stratified whole that make up the location of the commons uAD practice. Josaphat’s ground consists of its atmospheres as a living lab at large, a physical site, social networks and relations, the interstitial space, skills and knowledges, the digital world and a political scene. In this entangled combination of the ad hoc now and long term future, academia and practice, the micro with the scale of a regional area, the here and the envisioned there... the Arch.e illustrates her sensitivity to the “relational”, the “strategic” and “political”. Through hands-on building, she shows her spatial intelligence that requires “responsiveness” and “creativity” as well as it acknowledges the “incompleteness” of her agency. Less visible atmospheres constituting the social and knowledges highlight the Arch.e’s “attentiveness”, “caring” and “networking”, while the “political” is additionally stressed as it entails its atmosphere.

The transitional which I have discussed concerning tactical urbanism (De Smet & Van Reusel, 2018) brings up transversal collaboration as a facet of commons architecture. This resonates with the adjectives expressing the “relational”, “attentive”, “political” and “strategic”. The incremental approach inherent to the transitional echoes a combined “strategic” and “tactical” thinking complemented with an “active”, “enthusiast”, “outgoing” and “improvising” attitude. The desire-driven program which the transitional can help to build, then reveals how the Arch.e acts through “composing”, “scripting” and “communicating” which can benefit from her “attentive” and “relational” nature to find the building blocks from which to compose a narrative to build meaning.

The open container of clustered adjectives that make up the persona of the Commons Architect.e can be traced back in the patterns that underlie the what, how and where and when of the come uAD practice. The patterns also reveal how the Arch.e’s “strategic” attitude also requires a “tactical” awareness and that her “creativity” is tied to her “incompleteness” as it leans on “adaptivity” and “messiness”. Moreover, it turns out that her “caring” and “attentiveness” are “political” in nature. The patterns show that the clustering whole of adjectives that define the Commons Architect.e, is incomplete and overly intermingled while it embraces contradictory attitudes. The Arch.e is still very much “becoming”.

## b. Challenging Modern Architect

Knowing the persona of Commons Architect.e is ambiguous and messy, I have nevertheless tried to identify her through a series of clustering adjectives. I mold her figure in the aspiration to create a model that can embody an altering architectural stance to the one of the, by our neoliberalist society's preached and praised, Modern Architect. The Arch.e in this role represents the tactical urban planning approach that De Smet and I (2018) propose, and she advocates wandering and architecting as altering design strategies for city making. In her commons uAD practice, she playfully adapts the architectural supports of the imagination and funding, while she uses the built as spatial manifestation of her relational values and commons-oriented vision.

In her altering ambition, I would like to position the model of Commons Architect.e in comparison to Modern Architect and his preference for positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance, and self-interest. In contrary to the caricature of Participation Architect, does the Arch.e not place herself in a frontal juxtaposition to an this "all evil antagonist". After all, the Arch.e acknowledges that Modern Architect has partially made her architectural upbringing of the Arch.e.

First and foremost the Arch.e questions the positivist logic and more strongly recognizes the cultural layer that comes with uAD. Being attentive, relational and emotionally engaged; the Arch.e embodies another rationality that does not build on technical objectivity. She can lean on her local and partial –situated– knowledges. She moves away from the technical authority of "the architect" and is consciously avoiding complicated jargon. Doing so, she invests her creativity in simplified imaginations as well as she values the existential banality of the everyday. Being attentive and aware of what is living at Josophat, she relates to the emotional perception of the urban livelihood.

Hands-on construction at the field is more her thing. Her practice aspires a tactical urban planning approach that builds its program on a desire-driven base, which is explored through a combined strategic and tactical agency. She accepts imperfectness, although she also shares Modern Architects disregard to it. She sees potential in the openness and imprecision of performative micro-interventions as she is sensitive to their underlying meaning. Being part of a "we" of commoners, she also engages in the commons practice just for fun. She cherishes the lebendige. This translates in her own particular and improvised aesthetics that find beauty through experience and as such breathe social materiality, which she values over more neat and sleek results. Through her inviting character, she opens up the design process to a multiplicity of reflections as she implements wandering and architecting as design strategies.

When it comes to the technical detailing, she stands by Modern Architect's side as she prefers to leave this to the builders who know what they are doing. She has not much interest in hardcore quantifiable criteria as she approaches her sites of action beyond the strictly physical and accountable. After all, she also has to admit that the budgets and built scale she deals with, don't show impressive numbers.

Modern Architect's predictability and his hung for control and efficiency clashes with the Arch.e's aspiration to establish commoning governance and to support infrastructuring. Where Modern Architect aims to stage organized participatory process as to remain in control of the overall design process, the Arch.e lets go and allows the design process to wander. Similarly, she values incremental growth. Taking small steps at a time, the commons uAD practice finds adaptivity and adhocism. The Arch.e surfs on the waves

of serendipity as she has confidence in the community of agents she is working with, valuing their creativity and imagination.

She is open to change (multi-layered openness) and even consciously welcomes and invites it through her imaginations. She is confident this facilitates engaged participation and peer to peer feedback. She likes to dream wild, although uncertainty swipes her off her feet from time to time. But her location merely is situated in the interstitial space. It is in this uncertain gap she finds autonomy.

Also, the Arch.e might get frustrated with the unpredictable course of commons uAD, certainly when she feels the situation is stagnating. But she has the active enthusiasm to seek to re-energize. Her aspiration for commoning governance makes the Arch.e willing to trade off efficiency to invest in a stronger legitimization of her performative actions. Equally, she is ready to slow down the design process if this helps to build a stronger legitimization and appropriation.

Sometimes things go wrong. The Commons Architect.e can lose her direction. Trial and error are part of the game. And as the Arch.e remains on the barricades to advocate to let go in favor of commoning, she also feels how the uncertainty and lack of predictability eat away energy and time.

The third element of Modern Architect -his independence- addresses matters of concern related to the distance with which development plans are being made. The Arch.e seeks to challenge this alienation of the local identity through transversal collaboration. To overcome generic results, her imaginations implements details that reveal an embedded and present position. Her entangled position within architecting makes her direct relational attentiveness part of her design strategy. Valuing what is rather invisible, the Arch.e cares for relational values, ad hoc needs and long term visioning, which she uses as the base for her composing and scripting agency.

Her strong entangled and relational approach come with awareness to bring together the ad hoc now and the long-term future, the micro of the commons practice with the district scale of Josaphat, the theory with the practice. To share this ambition, communication, presenting and promoting allow her to connect her composed vision to those of her peers. Her networking agency is indispensable to seek to bridge local actors and to work towards a collaborative approach with the public stakeholders. After all, the Arch.e functions but in a design process that is carried by a “we” of commoners.

However, the Arch.e cannot but acknowledge the struggles that come with her dependent position. Finding funding and building socio-material capital are indispensable, both aid as well as threaten the autonomy of the commons practice. The Arch.e likes to protect the autonomy of her practice, yet she needs to watch out this does not compromise legitimacy. Seeking collaboration becomes a highly strategic and political endeavor. The Arch.e can be envious of Modern Architects efficient and independent position, which allows him to focus on the architectural, as built, quality of his designs while she spends her time doing invisible work coordinating and facilitating.

With her aspiration to establish commoning governance, the Arch.e seeks to stay away from the dominating attitude that characterizes Modern Architect. She does not believe her technical expertise is a valid excuse to impose authority. She actively seeks to share ownership, responsibilities and the decision-making involved in the commons uAD practice. After all, she is but one out of many agents that realize the commons practice at Josaphat. Democratization is of crucial importance to her.

To collectively find direction and establish commoning governance, the Arch.e imple-

ment architecting as a strategy to “take from where they –or rather we- come, to affect where they –we- go”. She looks for strategic dialogue through a wandering design strategy. Here the Arch.e outplays her strategic as well as an influential and highly political side. Moreover, she feels at ease going back to the streets and is not afraid to engage in sincere and conflictual debates if this allows her to avoid Modern Architect’s one-directional communication.

In the balancing exercise between legitimacy and efficiency, she has made some significant steps away from Modern Architect, who prefers to remain close to the efficiency pole. With an appreciation for the every-day, her interventions entail a small scale, and the Arch.e is pleased to know the commons interventions at Josaphat do not come across as pharaonic, like Josaphat’s master plan does. But she has to be honest and admit she can only dream of an iconic manifestation of the commons uAD practice. And although the Arch.e is highly critical about Modern Architect and his close friendship with Economic Man, the Arch.e does aspire to step in Josaphat’s planned development process. And although she would do so in the vain hope to alter Brussels’ contemporary uAD, she also feels highly uncomfortable about it. Would she herself sacrifice such vast land of nature?

As a final characteristic, the self-interest of Modern Architect is challenged by the caring and generative approach the Arch.e embodies. First and foremost the Arch.e looks to escape from the neoliberalist mechanisms that define the urban livelihood as a commodity. Not approaching Josaphat as a financial investment, her performative agency values the relational over the monetary. Funding to her also consists out of money as it entails socio-material resources and she aims to put in place solidary economies. The interstice as a gap in the market-approach provides her a location to explore the transitional. The Arch.e defends the right to use over the one granted to ownership.

Modern Architect’s extractive stance makes her shiver as the Arch.e looks to support the generative ambitions that come with commoning. She is not afraid of reproductive work, invisible facilitating and coordinating. Caring to her is serious business, although she hits the wall when she remains too kind. In her constructive approach, she needs to remind herself to stay sufficiently critical.

Where Modern Architect rushes to show off quick and spectacular results, the Arch.e takes her time. She also feels pressure to do something about the imperfectness and messy aesthetics of the commons micro-interventions. She does want to be able to impress and sell her work, so she wonders how she can make the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions sexier.

Moreover, the Arch.e might be jealous of Modern Architect’s close relation to Economic Man. She might also gain from collaborating with private developers. Economic Man might become a useful companion in her quest for commons-oriented uAD to thrive in Brussels. The Arch.e is reluctant, but she has to admit this is a potential path to explore.

Overall, the Arch.e as an altering model might provide a nuancing counterweight for Modern Architect. As an altering model, she certainly has her flaws. She is quite young and will have to mature as she continues to find herself. She is not the heroic protagonist that will storm in and overrule Modern Architect’s way of city making. Though she is fighting her cause and nudges toward an altering uAD practice. In this, she is still very much searching. The searching is her nature.

More than a model, the Arch.e is a (be)longing. Her being and becoming are made up through her longing to move away from Modern Architect as he acts out at Josaphat

(Brussel in large). To contribute to a better quality of life and to support democratization, she finds both “where she belongs and how she wants to become” (Petrescu, 2007, p. 6).

The persona of the Arch.e should not be too romanticized either. Characteristics such as caring, attentive-ness and facilitating might seem like an open door as they are ubiquitous. Practicing them in uAD is not as evident as it might appear. The Arch.e’s is willing to sacrifice efficiency, which requires time, patience and dedication as well as confidence and trust in your peers. Her practice is uncertain and messy, slows down and stagnates from time to time. In a world led by Economic Man, such a time-consuming practice does not appear to be very sustainable. The Commons Architect.e values personal and emotional engagement; her relational stance defines her agency. She has shameless confidence in those who stand by her side. Things can get more fun, yet also can become strikingly hurtful. With the unpredictable design course, the Arch.e puts her wellbeing at stake. Aspiring to support the creation of urban commons, she needs to be flexible, tolerant and open to never-ending (self)criticism. Her agency consists of dependency and caring. She relies on her enthusiasm and active presence as well of those of others. She has to watch out these do not burn away. After all, what will be left of my persona once the lebendige is gone?

Luckily the Arch.e can rely on a remarkable community of fellow commoners. These can form quite a challenge to deal with from time to time, yet more often her peers inspire her and provide her with relevant insights. They tolerate her mistakes and surround her with an atmosphere of appreciation and confidence. The Arch.e does not stand alone.

The Commons Architect.e as she experiments and gains form at Josaphat’s ground, embodies a (be)longing for an altering uAD practice. Not aspiring to bury Modern Architect in oblivion, I do hope the Arch.e can give him a gentle yet firm push to the side. I hope she –in her way- can contribute to an altering uAD practice for Josaphat in her symbolic relevance for Brussels. The Commons Architect.e finds her significance in embodying some of the simmering potentials that I feel to be present in Josaphat’s electrifying air. One that I believe resonates with atmosphere that surrounds other renowned examples of urban commons. In how far she can make her mark and change the status quo generalized in the caricature of Modern Architect remains to be further explored.

# 00.08

emergent themes

## THE BECOMING OF THE ARCH.E

*Stel dat ik, tegen beter weten in, toch de plek vind - misschien duurt het langer dan een mensenleven om er te komen. Maar stel dat ik het ben, dat ik de plek vind, hoe zal ik jou dan laten weten waar die is, en stel dat zoiets lukt, zul je mij weten te vinden?*

- P. Verhelst (2017, p.101)



In chapter 00.07 “*Commons Architect.e*” I have discussed my newly created persona. As a contemporary mutation of Participation Architect” she aims to overcome some of his shortcomings that are discussed in chapter 00.06 “*A turning point?*”. The Commons Architect.e –Arch.e for the friends- fight to balance out the agency of Modern Architect who, as discussed in chapter 00.05 “*A field of tension*”, shows to be still dominantly present in the urban architectural design (uAD) scene.

Having my “*Feet on the ground*” (00.03) on the Josaphat site in Brussels, I have developed a doctoral research and design practice through the method of design-based participatory action research. As part of a “we” of commoners an everyday architectural practice has been created that is supported by an underlying commoning, which I have discussed in chapter 00.04 “*House-garden-and-kitchen stories*”.

In this process, the obtained lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing that have been achieved have supported me to unravel the patterns -as certain modes of the practice- and adjectives -characterizing the practice- that define the being of the Commons Architect.e.

By describing the modes that identify the practice of the Commons Architect.e (00.07.01), the ways in which it manifests (00.07.02) and the where and when in which it is situated (00.07.03), I have molded her persona. In addition, I, with the help of my peers on the field, have listed adjectives (00.07.04) that characterize the altering architectural agency that is explored within the doctoral research and design practice.

In this chapter 00.08 “*The becoming of the Arch.e*”, I aim to further analyze and discuss the persona of the Arch.e. I do so by discussing the process of her becoming as it occurred in the doctoral research and design practice.

First, the process of four years of design-based participatory action research are retraced through several “acts” (00.08.01). These acts define ten phases that each cluster a series of actions and events –as listed in the timeline (TL). Several of the techniques that have emerged through these acts will be discussed; these techniques consist of concrete methods that have been applied by the Arch.e to act on specific challenges.

Ten “coping techniques” that each connect to a specific act will be discussed more in detail (00.08.02).

## 00.08.01 The Arch.e’s development in ten acts

Furthermore, ten guidelines are discussed that build on the on Josaphat grounded experience. These offer handles for concrete and/or fundamental methods and tools that could create more space for the Arch.e in the Brussels uAD scene.

In this section, I will retrace the timeline (TL) that reconstructs the actions and events of the design-based participatory action research on and around Josaphat. The four-year process is phased in “acts” that –like in a theater play- mark a cluster of actions and events that come together under an overarching milestone moment.

Building on to the timeline (TL) and the summarizing timeframe (MAP) provided in the beginning of this written account (see 00.02.04.b), this section and its accompanying scheme (see 00.02.04.c) retrace ten acts that describe the becoming of the Commons Architect.e.

The overall timeframe of the doctoral research and design practice does not define clear cut marking points between the different acts. The acts gradually transit from one phase into another and have certain actions or events that define a milestone and underlying techniques. For this reason, the timeframe the is printed on transparent paper has a gradient background color. The timeframe has the main happenings within the urban activism on and around Josaphat listed in its middle column. On the left side the actions that are visualized and reflected upon in the timeline (TL) are listed, while the right column provides space to mark the acts. Here, also the techniques that reveal the art of being a Commons Architect.e are listed under the specific act at which they occurred.

## Act 0 – Observe and absorb

**TIMING** / Act zero starts a bit before the initiation of the doctoral research and its related design practice, when the Josaphat site and its surrounding activism would be introduced to me. This act entails more or less four months stretching from October 2014 until February 2015. However, the observing attitude that underlies this act and its implemented techniques remain active throughout the whole process.

**ACTIONS** / This foundational act entails actions such as exploring the field, participating in the workshops organized by Commons Josaphat and exploratory walking (see 00.08.fig.1, & 2). Overall, this act zero marks a phase of observing and absorbing. As a new actor on the field, the Commons Architect.e has first and foremost aimed to understand the context and concerns at stake.

**FOCUS** / Even though this the observing attitude will stay throughout the whole design-based participatory action research process, this act marks a strong focus on the absorbing of the existing dynamics. This phase entails the physical action of touching the ground while diving into the visionary claims of Commons Josaphat and getting to know the plans as they are being developed by the MSI. At this stage of entering the foggy air of Josaphat, the techniques that have applied during this act mainly consists of reaching out in a rather passive observing role to gain sight.

**PATTERNS** // Some of the patterns that underlie this observing and absorbing attitude of the Arch.e relate to the pattern of architecture. This pattern describes the entangled and processes-oriented mode in which the Arch.e works. Actions such as walking around Josaphat, interviewing key actors and participating in workshops reveal how the Arch.e looks to actively relate to involved stakeholders and Josaphat as a landscape and site of action.

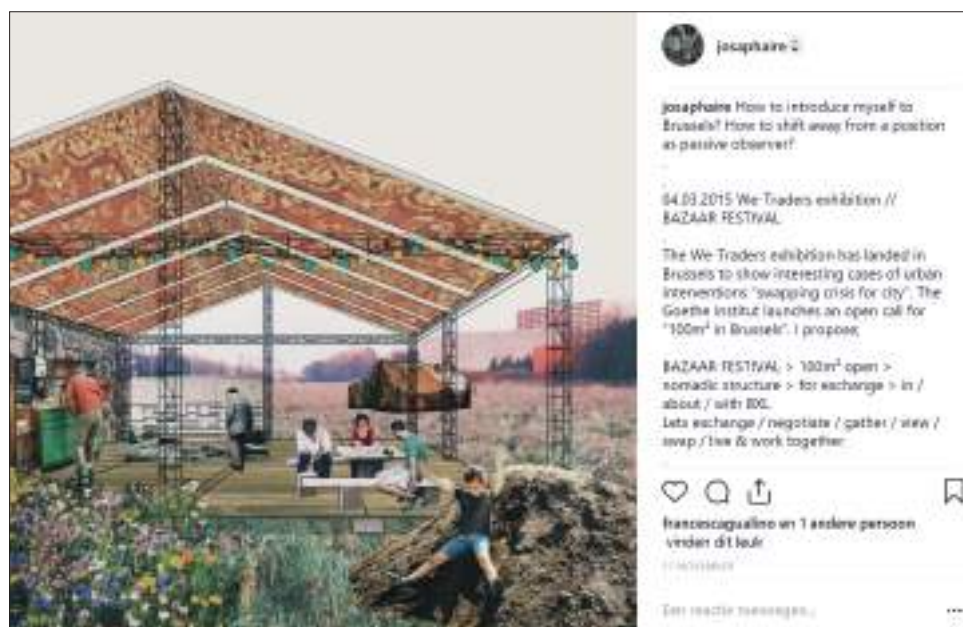
**TECHNIQUES** / As a still completely lost Commons Architect.e, I have implemented several techniques throughout this stage. These will be discussed more in detail in the following section. Overall, these techniques –as methods to act on a specific challenge and/or goal- concern getting in touch with different stakeholders such as the public actors, neighbors and urban activists. Moreover, act zero is about setting foot on the ground, studying the context, slowly introducing yourself and entails a lot of listening and observing. Throughout this process, I have slowly became familiar with the physical site, its surroundings and its agents. Only starting to envisage some possibilities, I have



00.08.fig.1 - TL.17.01.2015 Exploring the field.



00.08.fig2 - TL05.03.2015 Exploratory walking.



00.08.fig.3 - TL.04.03.2015 We-Traders exhibition // BAZAAR FESTIVAL.



00.08.fig.4 - TL.12.09.2015 Picnic the commons.

slowly shifted to a role that became a bit more active, gradually moving away from this phase of one directional listening and absorbing of information.

ADJECTIVES / In this act it were mainly the Commons Architect.e's attributes such as her attentive nature and interpretative capacities that are awakened. Moreover, toward the end of this act, when an exchange of ideas emerges, she also displays her imaginative and relational skill while her curiosity pushes her to develop her networking abilities.

REFLECTION // Everything is still very foggy at this stage. The lived experiences of this stage that I have reconstructed (REC)<sup>1</sup> show I did not had a clue. Moreover, there was not much conviction something would be able to grow from Josaphat's muddy ground. "*Little did I know back then...*" Looking back, I can see thow this naive exploration phase has been a blessing that later on would allow me to wildly imagine possibilities and to get into action.

## Act I – Act on the vision

TIMING / The first act starts around March 2015 when the first lasting interventions on the Josaphat site are made. As a period, act one stretches over more or less six months and gradually transits in the following act around September 2015 when a collective vision is being formed, while some of the imagined interventions are getting closer to their realization. This act concerns the first steps taken by the Arch.e to become an active agent on and around Josaphat. She now takes on a more vigorous exploration that is possibility-oriented, rather than aimed to build understanding.

In addition this "act I" is also connected to the collective visioning process that had taken place before the doctoral research and design practice had initiated. The collective envisioning initiated by Commons Josaphat -as "act I bis"- is an indispensable part of the practice of the Commons Architect.e. I would like to emphasize that the (unheroic) model of the Arch.e is to be perceived beyond my architectural agency. This person blurs the agency of a multiplicity of actors agents who share ta common attitude and vision.

The collective envisioning (act I bis) and the actions for bringing this debate to the physical ground (act I) also remain throughout the overall process; however, they have occurred more strongly in these specific phases.

ACTIONS / This first act is defined by symbolic events, such as the installation of the first plant box, which would grow to become the Jardin Latinis<sup>2</sup>. It is marked by the Arch.e's participation in the We-Traders exhibition, the organization of the first "picnic the commons" event and the public presentation of the by CJ collectively written vision for Josaphat as a commons neighborhood (see 00.08.fig.3 & 4). "Act I bis" can be related to the launching event of Commons Josaphat<sup>3</sup>.

FOCUS / In this milestone period, a strong focus on the shared vision can be recognized. On the one hand, it entails the process of co-creating this vision while in addition, a lot of energy and times is invested in bringing this debate to the physical site. The commons-oriented visioning and on-site linking welcome additional visions and interventions. The initiation of the Latinis garden would remain an autonomous project

1 See REC.2014.11.14 "*Getting to know Incubators of Public Spaces*" and REC.2015.01.17 "*First visit at Josaphat*".

2 See REC.2015.03.04 "*Imagine: One plant box on its way to Josaphat*".

3 See REC.2014.04.24 "*Video: Launching event Commons Josaphat*".



that Arch.e nudged to connect and link it to the broader visioning carried out by Commons Josaphat. The first act would result in an increased and shared imagining of what more could be possible as well as it would start to activate Josaphat's ground beyond a punctual event-based use.

**TECHNIQUES** / The main techniques that are implemented in this first act start from appropriating the developed vision. Other techniques entail exploring my own position, looking what is already there and how this can become the starting point of something more. This is linked to the creation of imaginations that would become more energetical while communication would gradually become part of the initiating commons architectural practice. Actively inviting in people, building up a rhythm and gaining ground would help to achieve the goal to bring the broader debate to the physical site.

**ADJECTIVES** / This first act connects to the communicative and more active attitude of the Arch.e. However, she is not completely her outgoing self. But her enthusiastic and networking skills are definitely unfolding in this phase. Moreover, as she is growing her familiarity with Josaphat's ground and the different interests of various stakeholders, she also develops an interpretive and speculative stance.

**REFLECTION** / From my lived experiences, the first act is strongly defined by a hesitating exploration. Most of the energy is invested in looking for opportunities and leads. It combines the search to appropriate an ongoing visioning process. How do you remain respectful to the work that has already been invested and realized by an existing community? How can you appropriate it without losing the overall vision? It requires a thoughtful process of touching upon your own and other's interpretation of the common vision.

This relates to the exemplar urban commons of Parckfarm, where Petra Pferdmeiges has invested a significant amount of time to meet the local actors. Bringing out the vision that was framed through the Parckfarm project, these encounters have allowed to integrate several informal and spontaneous imagined interventions -such as a pizza oven- in the final project.

The actions, especially the organization of the first "Picnic the commons" event, helped to establish a position as an active part of the existing Commons Josaphat dynamic. If I would have grasped the full complexity of social and political dynamics that I can see now after four years, I would have been paralyzed. My advice would be to not hesitate to get in action once you have puzzled together an overall, yet still incomplete understanding. Follow your intuition, look for "partners in crime" and have fun launching your first own intervention as part of a bigger whole.

## Act II - Make it happen

**TIMING** / "Act II" transits from the first vision-based act as several ideas for projects start to pop up and gain form. This period roughly covers a timing from September 2015 until January 2016.

**ACTIONS** / Key actions in this second act are the collective creation of a framework for the self-proclaimed transitional use and the crowdfunding of the Recup'Kitchen project<sup>4</sup> (see 00.08.fig.5 & 6). Especially the crowdfunding campaign consumed a fair share of the Commons Architect.e's practice. At the same time, it marked a significant

<sup>4</sup> See REC.2015.11.01 "Scout: preparing for the crowdfunding campaign".



upsurge in communication that allowed this Recup'Kitchen concept to develop into a project. Scouting the realization of Recup'Kitchen, an enthusiast team developed that can be considered as a group of diverse Architect.e.s.

**PATTERNS** / The second act encompasses patterns that take on a more pragmatic level in the ambition to have some of the imagined ideas transformed into happening projects. While most of the imaginations<sup>5</sup> that arose in the first act are wandering around<sup>6</sup>, the practice increasingly focuses on having one of the conceptualized ideas come to life by finding funding<sup>7</sup> through crowdfunding. In this strongly practice-oriented engagement, the Arch.e aims to link the emerging urban commons projects back to the vision-oriented process that is led by Commons Josaphat.

**FOCUS** / This act in the becoming of the Commons Architect.e reveals her active and communicative skills in making the proposed Recup'Kitchen intervention happen. Promoting, presenting, networking, welcoming and inviting show to be crucial attributes to obtain funding with the increase of active engagement as its most interesting side-effect.

**TECHNIQUES** / Some of the techniques that strongly emerge in this second act are the on-going and enforced imagination process and the scouting of ideas. Moreover, the Arch.e acts to maintain the obtained rhythm of activities while she in the meanwhile creates space to link action and vision. This enlarged focus on the concrete actions resulted in the co-creation of a framework for the transitional use.

**REFLECTION** / This period has been very intensive and exciting. It is empowering to promote and bring out the possibilities you have start to bring together in imaginations. Mainly the hope to make your small scaled initiative actually get realized through a collaborative realization process fires up the passion. This passion is increasingly shared with a growing community. However, how adventurous and exciting this scouting phase –especially in the form of a crowdfunding campaign- might be, it is very time and energy demanding. Failure lures around the corner. And as one of the driving forces behind the project, you feel a growing responsibility to take this endeavor to a good ending. You don't want to disappoint all those people you have managed to engage in the meanwhile.

Due to the intense communication campaign for the crowdfunding, my person -as Arch.e- had become the face of the project. Although flattering, this is a tricky position. It is challenging to not dominate the bigger support base. After all without them, it is impossible to have this scouting process to come to a successful result.

A similar visually central position of the architectural agency can be recognized in the exemplar cases of urban common. Parckfarm, R-Urban and the Prinzessinnengärten are all three strongly associated with certain people that stand behind the project. These persons take an active role in the communication and dissemination of the work. It illustrates the importance -yet also dangers- of the communicative and promoting character of the Arch.e.

Later on in the doctoral research and design practice more scouting processes would take place. However, crowdfunding, as a means to find funding, is not on the table anymore. As relevant as it might have been to reach out and build a strong community, both in sense of bringing together a core team as well as having your project to become known in the Brussels scene, I would not see how I could dedicate so much energy and time again. This is a pragmatic -efficient?- choice.

5 See section 00.07.01.a "Its imaginations".

6 See section 00.07.02.b "Wandering".

7 See section 00.07.02.d "Finding funding".

### Act III – Construct

**TIMING** / The beginning of this third act is defined by the successful closing of the crowdfunding campaign in February 2016. We have proven our imagination is possible, now it is time to actually create what we have promised ourselves and our broader community. This “act III” is a rather short milestone moment that only covers three months until April 2016 when Recup’Kitchen kicks off with its inauguration event.

**ACTIONS** / This construction-oriented act within the becoming of the Arch.e is marked by the internal organization of the Recup’Kitchen team that goes hand in hand with the drawing and making of the interior of the “roulotte” (the circus wagon in which the kitchen is installed). This act is strongly determined by the physical creation of the Recup’Kitchen project, yet in parallel several networking and imagining events keep on taking place such as a workshop with architecture students from Sint-Lucas (see 00.08. fig.7 & 8).

**FOCUS** / This third phase strongly focuses on the realization of imagined projects through their concrete construction.

**PATTERNS** / In “act III” the architecting<sup>8</sup> pattern becomes more dominant. The process of observing, becoming a participant and gradually developing an active role, as initiated in “act 0”, have helped to build an entangled and processual approach in the design process. This allows “to take from where they come to affect where to go” (Bengtsson et al., 2016). The physical construction process brings up the specific aesthetics<sup>9</sup> that come with the emerging commons uAD practice. In addition, the performative nature<sup>10</sup> of the commons architectural practice is growing stronger; the underlying relational values become visible through their realization at micro-level and as such alter the reality.

**ADJECTIVES** / These patterns connect to the Commons Architect.e and her active, improvising, imperfect and facilitating nature. Enthusiasm and a composing attitude show to be useful to support the creativity of the involved communities. In addition, networking and being relational help to realize a mainly a construction process that is dependent of the recuperation of materials. Moreover, caring and attentiveness bring in another level of support as this co-creation phase is demanding for the involved volunteers.

**TECHNIQUES** / Some of the characterizing techniques are the physical intervening and its closely aligned “building of a presence” on the Josaphat site. Moreover, it requires muddling through the chaos while playfully acting and making steps forward. Furthermore, the “act III” demands the Arch.e to keep on reaching out intensively and to continue the debate in relation to the ongoing construction process.

**REFLECTION** / To see your collectively imagined project turn into reality is a truly empowering experience and to me still withholds the magic of the built architectural. However, to construct and make an imagination become real is a challenging process, especially when it is loaded with tons of ambitions. Working with recuperated materials, looking to build on-site, trying to open up the construction process... Trying to achieve all of this within a limited amount of time and mainly thriving of voluntary engagement, it is challenging. The physical result of this intense and fun process does not live up to the my (Modern Architect-based) aspiration for a finished design. As we invest our

8 See section 00.07.02.a “Architecting”.

9 See section 00.07.01.d “Its aesthetics”.

10 See section 00.07.01.b “Its performative nature”.



00.08.fig.5 - TL.09.10.2015 Temps des communs // time to have a chat.



00.08.fig.6 - TL.06.11.2015 Recup'Kitchen crowdfunding.



00.08.fig.7 - TL.09.03.2016 Imaging a kitchen.



00.08.fig8 - TL.19.03.2016 - On the table.

energy and time in the preparation for Recup'Kitchen's opening event, we are sincerely proud of what we have managed to achieve. Though, let's be fair; the physical result of the construction process could be definitely better.

A lot can be learned from the exemplar urban commons cases discussed earlier in this dissertation. Sharing a similar aesthetics, Parckfarm and R-Urban have significantly strengthened the performative gesture of their spatial interventions as these are nicely finished and solid. Looking good, impacts good; these altering urban architectural design interventions have succeeded to remain respectful to the specific aesthetics -and its inherent atmosphere- while providing strong visual statements.

#### Act IV – Take care and repeat

**TIMING** / The next act in the becoming of the Commons Architect.e concerns the continuation of the constructed projects through caretaking and ongoing activation. This milestone period stretches from April 2016, when Recup'Kitchen has its opening event, until September-October later that year when I've moved to Turin to continue the doctoral research and design practice from there.

**ACTIONS** / This fourth act is characterized by the organization of regular Recup'Kitchen events, the continuation of the visionary work of Commons Josaphat and the bringing together of this long term and large scale reflection with the everyday of the on-site use of Josaphat through the "Wasteland Festival" (See 00.08.fig.9 & 10). In addition, the project for the Maison des Possibles advances as the decision is made to merge the "Make-It" project of Ivan with the "Huis van de Commons" concept by Commons Josaphat.

**FOCUS** / This act strongly focus on the on-site construction and realization of imagined projects. The commons practice is re-enforced by an intense investment in regular events that provide space for debate and is complimented by an conscious process of caring.

**PATTERNS** / Thriving of a heavy investment in the activation of the Josaphat site in relation to the commons-oriented vision, the following patterns endorse the practice of the Arch.e: the creation and expression of imaginations keeps on evolving as the performative interventions that are realized are strengthened by directly connected debates. It is mainly the *lebendige*<sup>11</sup> that acts out in this phase. The south west corner of Josaphat revives as a space for encounter, exchange, caring and mindful commoning. Josaphat is increasingly being manifested as a physical and social space for urban commoning.

**ADJECTIVES** / In this "act IV" the personality of the Arch.e blossoms as she fully invests in communicating, facilitating, coordinating, promoting, presenting, caring, inviting and composing. Entangling on-site action and broader visioning, the active and enthusiast being and relational and attentive nature of the Arch.e come out in their most strong and influential form. In order to have all of this activation and ongoing caring happening, improvisation and confidence in the community of commoners are essential.

**TECHNIQUES** / Some of the techniques that underlie this intense moment of caring, repeat a lot of the modes of working and methods with which the Arch.e had grown familiar until this phase. To communicate, to keep on finding funding, to facilitate...

<sup>11</sup> See section 00.07.01.C "Its *lebendige*".



these actions help to advance and multiply the already initiated activation. Furthermore, the Arch.e looks to relaunch the more direct relation of the vision and action and invests in the overall coming together of actors and imaginations.

A strong emphasis on reconnecting can be recognized, while the rhythm of activation is maintained and accelerated. Less visible, but nevertheless relevant for the later phases are the setting up and implementation of a framework to support and bring together the different civic initiatives flourishing on and around Josaphat. In the meanwhile also the research aspect of the doctoral research and design practice support to analyze and present the broader picture of these local uAD interventions.

REFLECTION / I recall this fourth act as the most vibrant and fun part of this doctoral journey. The first solid visual and performative realizations have been made and strongly entangle with commons-oriented debate. This helps to connect Josaphat to the broader Brussels scene of urban activism. A significant amount of energy and time is still being invested, yet –different to the previous acts- it has been a collective endeavor of several communities and the results emerged quite directly. This made the process more encouraging. The phase reveals the energizing and empowering impact of the practice that combines with an on-site presence of the Arch.e through the eventual.

The experience at R-Urban in Colombes<sup>12</sup> had been very inspirational for this. Invited as one of the speakers to present the “*Josaphat en commun*” proposal, it had been empowering to see how the hosting of this presentation and related debate had brought together a variety of citizens. The discussion moment was hosted in the sheltering structure that was located next to the urban garden and had been followed up by a delicious meal that was prepared by a community of local women that self-governed this part of the project. The pleasantness of this combined debate and everyday conviviality revealed the importance of caring and physical connection in order to bring out a rather intellectual discourse to the lively everyday of the place at stake.

Still today, I strongly believe in the more strong impact debate and action have when they are directly connected to a convivial moment. This makes it possible to live the aspired relational values that underpin the visioning. Caring and the repeating these kind of actions allow to advance the commons uAD practice through multiplication. This is the very essence and strength of the practice by the Commons Architect.e

## Act V – Take distance

TIMING / This act in the becoming of the Commons Architect.e is strongly defined by the physical distance taken from the Josaphat ground. It entails two periods in which I had moved to live to Turin in the framework of a dual Ph.D. agreement with the Politecnico di Torino. The milestone period is most strongly marked by the period between September 2016 and January 2017, yet it also is present under the following “act VI”.

ACTIONS / Throughout this period of physical distance, this “act V” entails some actions and events in which the continuation of the overall practice is maintained punctually. An example of this is the “chantier ouvert” event intended to break open the creation process of the Maison des Possibles.

FOCUS / Central to this phase is an absence of the Arche.e, this creates mores space for others to act in the house-garden-and-ktichen interventions and entails a focus on

12 See TL.12.07.2015 “Exchange Colombes // R-Urban”.





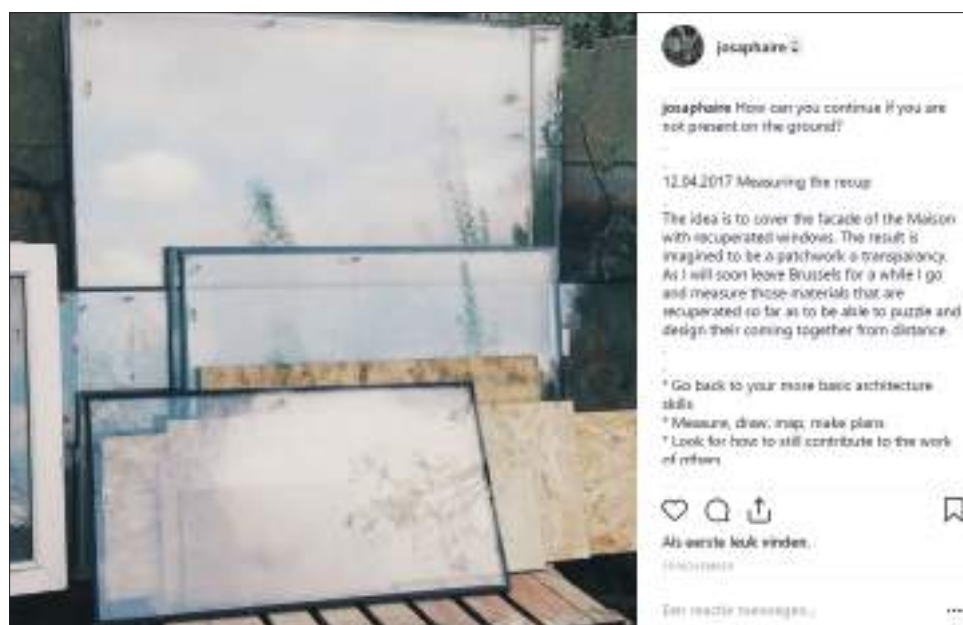
00.08.fig.9 - TL.17.05.2016 Schaarbeek laet.



00.08.fig.10 - TL.05.08.2016 Wasteland festival // Pass-ages.



00.08.fig.11 - TL.16.10.2016 Chantier ouvert.



00.08.fig.12 - TL.17.04.2017 Measuring the recup.

more punctual and strategic events aimed at maintaining the dynamic.

**PATTERNS** / The physical distance allowed to invest more time in the research aspect of the practice. The main patterns that are at play in this phase are situated in the sites of action<sup>13</sup>. These consist of Josaphat as a living lab at large and the skills and “knowledge-s” that are developed and shared through it. On a more hidden level, a lot of work had been invested in the preparation of actions and events that occur in the following act.

This entails an analysis of and reflection on the commoning governance<sup>14</sup> that had been triggered by the MSI’s request to set up a juridical entity in order to be able to make an official agreement for the temporary use of Josaphat.

**ADJECTIVES** / In this phase the Arch.e reveals her more absent positioning. Her caring and facilitating nature still remain active. As, from a distance, she still manages to set up some activities and communicate on events. While slowly diving into more administrative work, like the request of a building permit for the Maison des Possibles, the rhythm is slowing down and the commons uAD practice is becoming more stagnant.

With the winter coming up and the general fatigue hitting in, this is also perceived as a welcome resting moment. Moreover, the absence of the Arch.e also is a relevant testing ground to read the impact this might or might not have on the Josaphat ground.

**TECHNIQUES** / Some of the techniques in this “act V” entail a physical distance, that combines with a growing emotional distancing. Interventions occur more punctual and are chosen more strategically, while communication and facilitation continue at an under-the-radar mode. It is a challenge to balance between growing distance and remaining in touch. In the background, a strong collaboration is maintained with fellow (Arch.e) agents.

**REFLECTION** / This period has been challenging, taking physical and emotional distance means growing an emotional resilience as professional actor—letting go of some of the emotional stress. However, it also implies missing out on a lot of the fun and caring that is situated within the everyday liveliness of Josaphat’s ground. It has been a useful check to see how self-sustaining the on-going commoning process are. I was -and still am- confident that the several active communities around Josaphat can do without me -as a person-; however, it has been an important reality check to see if and how my absence -also as Arch.e- would impact.

To me, the most challenging part was to loosen the direct relation and related sensitivity to what is playing on site. On the other hand, this distancing had been very healthy for me personally, as well as it allowed to open up a general breathing space. The feedback I’ve received from my fellow agents was that in their experience, mainly the communicating, coordinating, facilitating, presenting and inviting support had gone missing. Especially for Recup’Kitchen, my presence as Arch.e involves a sort of leadership that is not to be found in decision-making, but in making the decision-making.

This “act V” has been very challenging yet necessary, if only to downplay the highly emotional and very embedded engagement of the Arch.e. Moreover, it helped to see how the facilitating and coordinating role can be loosened, shifting some of the responsibilities and related burdens to fellow actors, who show to be definitely capable of handling this, even though it brings them additional stress.

I unfortunately have no insight in how the physical and emotional presence of the key actors within the R-Urban and Prinzessinnengärten project play out. It definitely

13 See section 00.07.03.a “Sites of action”.

14 See section 00.07.02.c “Commoning governance”.

would be relevant to look into this as in general a lot of spatial practitioner that take on a facilitating and coordinating role are challenged to find a balance between offering an active support and leaving enough space to not dominate or jeopardize the resilience of the urban commons project.

In the Parckfarm case, The urban commons project had been able to continue without the active involvement of the architectural duo behind this. This has been made possible by the support of the involved regional administration and through the creation of a nonprofit structure that is led by local actors now. The Farmtruck -as part of the Parckfarm project-, however, struggles to function without the professional support.

Things definitely shift with the presence or absence of the Arch.e, yet her agency can be found beyond me personally. Me being away created space for other agents to claim some more space and responsibilities. However, it seems nobody is really demanding to have this as an additional burden on their shoulders.

The absence of my architectural agency got “dangerous” though, in the sense that their had been a significant diminution of events that bring the different active communities together. In addition, the active invitation of newcomers to come and explore Josaphat also turned out to be triggered by the agency of the Arch.e. In this period a general sense of cohesion diminished and the relation between different on-site actors became more tense.

## Act VI – Get into politics

**TIMING** / Partly overlapping with “act V” in which the Arch.e takes distance, this phase entails a more strongly political orientation of the practice. This sixth act stretches from January 2017 until September.

**FOCUS** / This act is marked by a stronger political agency that is related to the positioning of the civic commons-oriented initiatives in relation to the public owner and development cooperation of Josaphat (MSI). This also implied the internal reorganization of Josaphat’s community of urban commons initiatives.

**ACTIONS** / This phase is defined by the filing of a request for a temporary building permit for the Maison des Possibles, the creation of the Josaph’Aire nonprofit and discussions on its internal organization. Furthermore, the Incubator’s research living lab stage is officially launched (see 00.08.fig.13 & 14).

**PATTERNS** / In this phase, the aim to establish a commoning governance is the most apparent pattern. There is both a strong orientation to invest in the collective care-taking, as well as there is an ambition to both internally and externally push for democratization. There is a strong desire to situate the practice in the transitional<sup>15</sup> and use the interstitial positioning as a strategic site of action to build up an impact in the political atmosphere of Josaphat’s ground.

**ADJECTIVES** / In this fifth act, the Arch.e reveals her political and strategic capacities. Her facilitating, coordinating and presenting skills are now more directed to governance rather than to concrete action. In addition, a very strong attentiveness and a valorization of the caring are at stake. In search for collective legitimization, the underlying attitude of the Arch.e becomes more influential and combines a speculative and interpretative stance with a constructive imaginative acting.

<sup>15</sup> See section 00.07.03.b “The transitional”

TECHNIQUES / Several of the techniques that are characteristic for this phase of “getting into politics” are aimed to advance the combining of vision with action and an active exploration to build legitimacy as internal politics play up. This is strongly related to the needed external repositioning of the collectivity of civic initiatives. Moreover, maintenance and stewardship of the claimed south west corner of Josaphat are put on the agenda. This will later on lead to the organization of the “Jour des Communs”. In the discussing and creating of the decision-making mechanisms, the commoning also becomes more explicit. In parallel, administrative work becomes essential in the search to build up a constructive relation with the public and official stakeholders involved in Josaphat’s urban development. This entails an attempt of civic initiatives to reach out to this “other side”.

This is not the most “sexy” phase of the becoming of the Commons Architect.e, but it expresses a relevant maturing of the practice. Administrative work, a lot of organizational meetings and debates, exploring decision-making mechanisms and a structuralizing are advanced in order to take care of what has been achieved so far.

More importantly, this phase reveals the necessity to get organized and to look for means to build internal and external legitimacy. In the previous “act IV” the action and fun had been emphasized, this “act VI”, in contrast, focuses on establishing a framework that could make these dynamics sustain. Commoning is no longer an ideal or set of principles we aim for, it becomes a sheer necessity. This requires a strong collectivity and common ground that -as the following act will display- is not evident to be obtained, especially as we started off as a grouping of several civic initiatives with their own changing vision and a strong autonomy.

The three exemplar urban commons cases have each started from a clear framework -project proposal- and/or had sufficient time to mature. All projects benefit from a strong organizational structure and a clear position in relation to the involved public and official stakeholders. This relation can be both collaborative and oppositional, and change easily (R-Urban and Prinzessinnengärten). However, all the projects had a clear position and accordingly have obtained a strong legitimization (at least what I can understand from the outside). The practice on Josaphat can definitely learn from these cases that managed to combine a commoning approach with a clear and strong governance structure and positioning.

## Act VII – Struggle

TIMING / This act entails a period of more or less eight months ranging from around September 2017 until April 2018.

FOCUS / This seventh phase represents the struggling in our collective exploration of how to set up more solid collaborations internally and externally. Most of this is related to the structuring of the Josaph’Aire nonprofit in relation to the negotiations for a convention for temporary use with the MSI.

ACTIONS / The most symbolic actions and events for this phase are the discussions on Josaph’Aire and what it should be(come) and the organization of the “Jour des Communs”. Moreover the tense discussions occur simultaneous with the ongoing construction of the Maison des Possibles as we had managed to obtain a building permit.

Throughout this same period the Forum, that started as part of the Josaph’Aire

community, distances itself from the community and continues its construction independently from the other civic initiatives on Josaphat. An additional layer of action is performed by the architecture students of the Spatial Mirror elective course which struggle to understand and find a position on Josaphat's ground.

PATTERNS / The agents who are rather artificially united under Josaph'Aire struggle to find common ground and to develop a collective position in negotiation for a convention with the MSI. The already simmering tensions surface and as the pressure from the outside rises, the polarizing positions of several agents come into conflict. The collective decision-making mechanisms have not been developed sufficiently, which make people question each other's legitimacy. Simultaneously, a collective awareness grows and acknowledges that we should, more than ever, stand strong together if we want to obtain a solid position in relation to the MSI and its as threatening perceived attitude. On Josaphat, the actions of imagining, scouting, constructing and caring increasingly reflects the tense atmosphere.

Different positions are represented by the different house-garden-and-kitchen projects that now seems to develop in opposition of each other, rather than in a the constructive supporting ambition they had started from. This period reveals a growing political sit of action and, accordingly, has been strongly defining the commoning governance of the uAD practice. The openness of the Josaph'Aire community also gets under pressure as previous made decisions are questioned again and again. The ideals of an open horizontal organization seems to run into its limits.

This results in rather unpleasant everyday atmosphere that hinders the activities of the Jardin Latinis and Recup'Kitchen. In this phase, the pattern of the lebendige is shifting to the background.

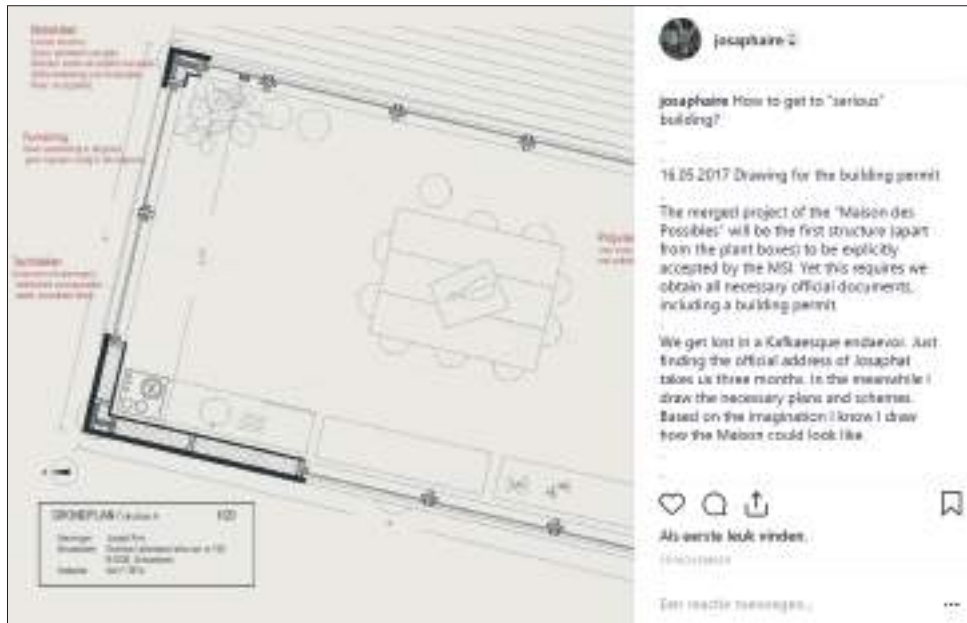
ADJECTIVES / In this "act VII" the attitude of the Commons Architect.e becomes less open. While the work for the Josaph'Aire nonprofit demands a more strategic and political stance, the enthusiastic and active spirit within several of the house-garden-and-kitchen projects stagnates and even disappear. Inviting and welcoming new actors and projects is beyond the scope now. It are the constructive and speculative attributes that motivate the Arch.e to keep on investing in her coordinating and facilitating role. In addition, the highly relational and attentive skills of the Arch.e encourage her to look for help of a professional outsider to take over the crucial facilitation that is necessary to build up a common ground again.

TECHNIQUES / Some of the techniques that underlie this phase are the negotiation process and the internal and external repositioning. This is related to the commoning spirit that is slipping away as the fun of the everyday atmosphere of Josaphat is fading. While searching for collaborations and aiming to overcome internal politics, it becomes clear that openness has its limits<sup>16</sup>. In addition, the mental absence several architecting-key actors combine with the slipping away of the everyday action. Josaphat's ground is left to host conflicting political debates and tense social relations.

REFLECTION / This has been the toughest phase in the becoming of the Arch.e so far. Maybe this is because this type of maturing of the practice was new to me as practitioner. It is quite particular to have an urban commons endeavor starting from so many civic initiatives that each have grown an autonomous, but visionary often vague position. Josaphat seems to be quite unique in relation to the reference cases discussed in section 00.06.02.c "*Towards a practice of urban commoning?*" where each of the three

<sup>16</sup> See REC.2018.11.08 – The "potagers des doctorants".





00.08.fig.13 - TL.16.05.2017 Drawing for the building permit.



00.08.fig.14 - TL.07.07.2017 Meet us in utopia.



00.08.fig.15 - TL.14.01.2018 Jour des Communs.



00.08.fig.16 - TL.15.12.2017 Temporary facade for a temporary structure.



00.08.fig.17 - TL.23.04.2018 Showing off at the WTC.



00.08.fig.18 - TL.20.05.2018 Jour des communes again.



00.08.fig.19 - TL.24.09.2018 Making a "état de lieu".



00.08.fig.20 - TL.24.10.2018 Signing up.



urban commons projects had a leading team with a strong vision.

As we seem to hold on to the physical construction process (making temporary solutions for temporary structures), caring shows to be not so evident and requires more attention. In relation to the exploration of a commoning governance, I believe this “act VII” is a relevant eye opener. It is time to stop allowing your legitimacy to be questioned internally, especially as your community is under pressure to obtain recognition from the outside. In this process, I also felt how my professional position as facilitator and coordinator came into conflict with my desire to protect and guard the commons-oriented vision from which I had started this very process. The strong engaged insider position came to conflict with the facilitating role of the Arch.e.

In the becoming of the Arch.e it has been a crucial life lesson to experience that openness and an ambition for participatory design have their limits. If you aim to set up commoning processes in which urban activism does not start from an “against” position, you better make sure you have a constructive and organized base. Being open to other perspectives and opinions does not mean you should change your own vision accordingly. New agents come and go, you need to maintain your stance without becoming rigid.

## Act VIII – Push through

**TIMING** / This eighth act runs from April until June 2018, when the “here and now” of this written account is positioned.

**FOCUS** / Even though the previous act had been rather rough, it has been a good reality check for the Arch.e. Being caring and attentive does not equal renegotiating every step you try to make together. The following act in her becoming is accordingly marked by a will to push through. It entails recovering the chosen direction and sticking to it.

**ACTIONS** / The main actions and events that characterize this act are the continuation of the internal debates on the convention for temporary use and the mapping of our potential directions. This is combined with the relaunching of the “Jour des Communs” and the presenting of the on-site activities as part of a united JosaphAire community (see 00.08.fig.17 & 18).

**PATTERNS** / In this phase the most dominant pattern evolves around the lebendige that we aim to revive again. Not all tensions have been resolved, but it is time for the convivial site of action to reclaim its space. The pattern of the transitional grows stronger again while finding funding and the imaginations still remain rather slumbering on the background.

**ADJECTIVES** / This phase in the becoming of the Arch.e reveals her scripting, visualizing and composing capacities. She is losing a bit of the improvising as she is increasingly promoting one clear direction for the practice. This promoting still strongly entangles with a political and strategic stance. The attentiveness, caring and relational still remain dominant characteristics, but do no longer as strongly define the practice of the Arch.e in this phase.

**TECHNIQUES** / Some of the techniques that come with this act’s focus on pushing through the chosen direction are the willingness to compromise and dialogue in search to move on according to the taken direction. This is combined with claiming responsibilities and legitimacy. The limiting of the openness that appeared to become problem-

atic at a certain point involves lowering the communication and the dedication to bite off criticism. Yet how to balance between efficiency and legitimacy? This remains an ad hoc exploration.

REFLECTION / After the struggling of the previous months, it is rather liberating to take a direction and stick to it. The willingness to move forward and to invest in the everyday and convivial atmosphere win from the dragging, though highly necessary political and strategic work.

Nevertheless, the “pushing through” implies a certain -dominating?- power and seems contradictory to the attitude embodied by the Arch.e. But this becoming process has revealed this is indispensable if you want things to happen. The strength of the transitional lies in the actions and the lebendige. Ideals and pragmatism both demand compromise. It is too easy to stick to philosophical disagreement, the Arch.e her attitude is still strongly characterized by a desire to bring an inspiring vision into a happening practice.

As an additional note, these insights on the crucial importance of the simplicity and banality of the everyday have ironically emerged as I increasingly neglected the coordination and activation of the everyday -due to the negotiation for a convention and the writing up of this book. I came too increasingly appreciate the lebendige as I witnessed it slipping away on Josaphat’s ground.

## Act IX – Protect and revive

TIMING / Stretching beyond the scope of the written account, “act IX” reveals some clues and lessons learned since June 2018 until December.

FOCUS / This act is characterized by the results of the “pushing through” phase that in October resulted in the signing of a convention with the MSI. The signed version of the convention is not ideal, but some essential changes have been obtained. This phase entails the follow-up of the direction that has been pushed through in “act VIII”.

ACTIONS / The actions that are crucial for this phase are the signing of the convention and a mapping of every single spatial intervention by Josaph’Aire in order to have them recognized (or not). In addition, issues with illegal dumping and the overnight presence of people at Josaphat that causes nuisance led to the closing of the entrance gate of the Josaphat site and the Maison des Possibles. The Maison’s warm welcoming atmosphere that this sheltered space with its wooden stove offers had been squatted for housing (see 00.08.fig.19 & 20).

PATTERNS / This act involves the recovery of the unsettling effects that the intense internal negotiations have caused. Moreover, it required taking up responsibilities in order to restore Josaphat as a pleasant meeting space by excluding those activities that break the few rules we had put in place. And so, despite our reluctance for it, we –as the leading agents behind Josaph’Aire- found ourselves in a watch dog position. This relates to the pattern of commoning governance, which requires clear rules and enforcing respect if necessary.

This more strategic and political process was indispensable; however, it is time to look forward now and advance and build on to the many beautiful things we have managed to realize together. Optimism and a will to continue the urban activism has reemerged. The imagination comes to wander again while I continue the already earlier process of finding funding. The future is in sight, let’s make our commoning grow strong and tran-



sition to alter the current practice of urban architectural design.

ADJECTIVES / Without losing her political and strategic streak, the Arch.e enthusiastically regains her active and promoting nature. Still exploring how to take on the “pushing through” spirit in a careful way, the emphasis is put back on the performative and outgoing, convinced practice.

TECHNIQUES / Some of the techniques that underlie this ongoing “act IX” entail looking forward and keeping the eyes at the horizon. In order to restore conviviality, the door is being closed while we try to bring the events and physical on-site action back through the “Faire” project. This is combined with the relaunch of the search for funding, in the hope to support a professionalization of the coordinating role. And not to forget, signing the convention and thus advancing the structuralizing process demands an investment in administrative and practical tasks.

It is still too early to provide a reflection on this act. Plentiful hopes and ambitions are there. The first priority I put up front for Josaph’Aire is to revive the pleasantness and basic importance of the banal everyday that makes Josaphat a ground of be(longing).

Second, I aim to link Josaphat’s story to the broader Brussels narrative and to emphasize its transitional potential in relation to the commons-oriented vision. I aspire to perform these ambitions through the Faire project.

Faire is a by the Flemish community subsidized project to organize a big event around a 1:1 structure. This intervention will stress the difference of Josaphat’s agency in relation to the generic white building blocks that are pictured in contemporary master plans, including the RPA/PAD at stake for Josaphat. In juxtaposition, we would build a temporary structure that is lived by several commoning initiatives in Brussels. This structure will show Jardin Latinis as an expression of a collective desire to have a stronger ecological awareness, connect back to nature and have food production in the urban environment. It will emphasize Recup’Kitchen’s way to implement an altering solidary economy and make public space a place for social cohesion and debate. The Maison des Possibles could show construction of affordable housing can happen in many ways.

Let’s imagine what a commons-oriented building block could look like, let’s explore how we can make that happen in the transitional experimentation zone we have at offer!

## 00.08.02 Ten of her coping techniques

In the previous section I have discussed ten acts in the Commons Architect.e's becoming. For each phase I have described its timing and focus within the doctoral research and design practice, I have brought up some of the key actions and linked the phase to certain patterns and adjectives that define the Arch.e. Moreover, I have also revealed some of the techniques that are at stake in each act, after which I conclude with a reflection.

In this section, I want to further discuss some of these techniques, which define concrete and situated methods. More specific I, in this section, will focus on those techniques that the Arch.e implemented to “cope” with certain challenging situations. A selection of ten such “coping techniques” will be described, one for each act. What characterizes them is their intuitive and reactive nature, aiming to respond to a specific aim and situation.

Of course as the list summarized in the timeframe scheme (MAP) reveals, many more techniques are implemented by the Arch.e within the design-based participatory action research. This is moreover represented in the timeline (TL) that reconstructs the main actions and events. And many more techniques will be still developed in the ongoing commons uAD practice. The ten coping techniques that will be discussed are but a selection that aims to provide some more insight in the agency of the Arch.e as well as it aspires to provide a handle and/or inspiration for those that are desiring to develop their own altering approach to uAD in Brussels and beyond.

### 0. Get in touch // act 0

As addressed in the previous section this act zero entails a search to first and foremost build an understanding through **observing and absorbing**. It involves getting in contact with diverse stakeholders, setting foot on the ground and slowly introducing yourself through participating in some of the existing dynamics.

One of the main techniques that have been implemented for this, is building understanding by getting in touch, literally and figuratively. **Walking** has been an important technique to build understanding. I have spent several days walking on and mainly around Josaphat, talking to people in the street and local shop owners. Especially the later turned out to be a useful radar to provide an idea of how people do (not) relate to a place. The sense of neighborhood of local inhabitants or people working in the area shows to be substantially different than what you would at first sight read from the maps.

I believe it is crucial for the Arch.e to confront the own professionally trained ways of reading plans, maps and neighborhoods to the everyday liveliness of an intuitively selected group of agents.

In this process it is important to be there in order to explore, to not let yourself get hold back to what at first impression feels alienating. Josaphat's first (winter period) appearance as the muddy and deserted piece of land it seemed had not been encouraging. I felt uneasy talking to people in the street, I had to push myself to repeat this action several times. I only started to let go as I felt the insights I was obtaining came to a point

of saturation and I had covered most of Josaphat's immediate surroundings.

Some of the techniques that are brought up in the timeline (TL) that reconstructs the main actions and events of the design-based participatory action research are:

- |                       |                                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ◦ Be there to explore | ◦ Accept to not know it all, be aware |
| ◦ Get in the mud      | ◦ Listen again                        |
| ◦ Let go of the map   | ◦ Be there to explore                 |
| ◦ Walk to observe     | ◦ Keep on walking and asking          |
| ◦ Ask questions       | ◦ Accept the distance                 |
| ◦ Repeat your actions | ◦ Don't force, but listen and inform  |

These techniques are not revolutionary, many of the students of our Faculty of Architecture (KU Leuven, Sint-Lucas) spontaneously start of their research by design as such. In the practice however, these kind of techniques seem to be mainly happening as part of –quite tooled– participatory workshops. In this context, citizens are invited to provide their opinion and concerns, or sometimes simply to come and listen to the already made plans<sup>17</sup>. Rarely, these techniques like walking are taken as an exercise for the designers, or administrations agents themselves to challenge their own predefined or unaware stance.

The Alive Architecture practice that is one of the leading curators in the Parckfarm project<sup>18</sup> addresses walking as a serious method. In her book on “*Founding Alive Architecture*”, Petra Pferdmenges (2018, p. 49) discusses walking as a method for observation: “*observing through walking is a way to get to know a space not only from a bird’s-eye perspective of the planner, but also from the lateral view*”. She furthermore connects walking and observing to a presence of the architect and also as an opportunity to conduct informal interviews. I can see how both these aspects of walking have been useful in the act zero of the becoming of the Commons Architect.e.

This practice of observing through walking needs to be combined with a broader reaching out. Not only walking had been an important coping technique for the Arch.e to build an understanding from scratch, it came hand in hand with interviewing all sorts of stakeholders such as people within the MSI and the urban planning department of the local municipality (Schaerbeek). It combined with studying Brussels uAD scene and diving into statistics.

When it comes to becoming a practitioner that allows for an altering –commoning– stance to uAD, walking shows to be a useful start to break open your own preconceived reading,

## I. Act small, shout out loud // act I

The first act in the becoming of the Arch.e explores how to **act on the vision**. This of course comes from the particular situation in which the collective of Commons Josaphat already had conducted a relevant work in launching an open call for ideas from which the commons-oriented vision for Josaphat got developed (act I bis). I found

17 An exemplar experience of this is the guided walks organized in the framework of the participation sessions for the making of the PAD (strategic masterplan) for the area around the Maximiliaan park in Brussels: <http://perspective.brussels/nl/stadsprojecten/kanaalgebied/beco-vergote/rpa-max-naar-een-richtplan-van-aanleg>

18 See section 00.06.02.c “Toward a practice of urban commoning?”.

myself stepping in an on-going visioning process, which I sought to appropriate in order to find my position.

An important technique that was crucial to transition from act zero to this next “act 1” would be to slowly become a participant in some of the already ongoing dynamics. Don’t write an email to a civic collective such as Commons Josaphat and sit and wait until you get a response. Often these urban activist collectives are overloaded by such requests while they already invest all of their energy on a voluntary base. Go out there and look for how you can give them something back.

In order to make the vision more “my own” I explored how I from my skills could contribute. The result is an exploration of several very **small physical actions** that were directly connected to communication and debate on the ongoing visioning process. By organizing on-site picnics, I aimed to actively invite in people and attract interest. This would become the crucial starting point from which to look how to create performative realizations to show the potential that we felt simmering through the collectively built vision.

The techniques that are brought up in the timeline (TL) that reconstructs the main actions and events of the design-based participatory action research are:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ◦ Feel the potential                                       | ◦ If you fail, act smaller                           |
| ◦ Take care of what needs protection                       | ◦ Look for the spectacular in the small and everyday |
| ◦ Do not be afraid to make seemingly insignificant actions | ◦ Find improvised and pragmatic solutions            |
| ◦ Garden, make things grow                                 | ◦ Be playful, remain serious                         |
| ◦ Invite curiosity   |  |

In this process, it is important to revive the enthusiasm of the collective vision and to from there look for action, albeit incredible small. The first pilot actions would concern imaginations; drawing and collaging how the vision could act out. Following steps would be made through event-based interventions on the ground. Calling out for people to join, the physical site would become the ground to dream out loud and set in motion the wandering of ideas.

It can be pretty scary to take this first step, and I’ve noticed that as architects we have the –in this situation- fortunate tendency to intervene in space as a means of research and creation. Don’t wait until you understood everything completely (this will never happen anyhow). Get out there, shout out and ask people to experiment how we could make this inspiring vision happen tactically on the ground. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes, you are acting on a micro level, you can mainly learn from it.

I am confident all three exemplar urban commons uAD projects I have described employed this technique in their own way. Though, only for the Parckfarm case, I have studied this specific early phase. The curatorial team of Alive Architecture and Taktyk had set up a vision for the 2014 edition of the Parckdesign biennale, for which they launched a call for teams of design professionals and local experts to propose a project within a certain budget. The clearly articulated vision and according framework together with a provided financing created space for several small-scaled projects to intervene in public space and experiment how to make the proposed vision happen within a temporary timing.

Starting of as experiments for how to make public space in Brussels, these strongly locally anchored social and economic uAD interventions in combination with the

integration of existing informal actions had become so successful, the project managed to overcome the ephemeral. Parckfarm could sustain its innovative use of public space. Today, the permanent project is ran by a nonprofit. Petra Pferdmenges herself motivates the success of the project lies both in its public recognition and the strong local involvement that had been made possible through the strong ambition to involve inhabitants (Pferdmenges, 2018).

## II. Ask for help // act II

One of the most important coping techniques of the Arch.e in the “**Make it happen**” phase of her becoming is to **ask for help** in the search to make some of the imagined projects happen. While the commons-oriented vision is increasingly gaining ground on Josaphat and the, as very small interventions started, actions are growing into physical realizations, it is time to transition to the phase in which some of the more ambitious projects are scouted (act II).

Looking to get into an altering uAD practice through the realization of a concrete project as Re-cup’Kitchen, the Arch.e implements several techniques to find funding, to have the creation process happen in a participatory manner and to build a community around it. For this you need help and so an important technique is to actively look for that support in different ways.

This process relates to many other techniques as are discussed in the previous section and the timeline reconstructing the main events and actions in the design-based participatory action research (TL):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Comply to security mechanisms to obtain trust</li> <li>◦ Present at every occasion</li> <li>◦ Actively invite people to join in</li> <li>◦ Don’t be too serious all the time</li> <li>◦ Test it out</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ If you are afraid to fail, accelerate, fight stronger</li> <li>◦ Do it together</li> <li>◦ Expand, go out</li> <li>◦ Allow your concept to be appropriated</li> <li>◦ Act it out, even before it is there</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

This active asking for help is strongly related to finding financing, as is the case in the crowdfunding campaign for Recup’Kitchen. It also involves building a community, getting ideas, finding materials you can recuperate for the construction process, have media communicate over your project and ask the MSI for their permission to use the by them owned Josaphat site to install the kitchen. Thriving of tolerance, active engagement and financial support, you can see how the imagined project might actually come to realization.

You might reach the milestone of obtaining the necessary funding, asking help will remain a crucial and lasting technique to be implemented. Looking back at the overall process in hindsight, this might be the most important participatory process after building a vision together.

In every uAD practice and realization of a project you will need help. Also this technique on its own is not ground breaking; however, it should be acknowledged as an active and demanding part of the work. No (architectural) project has ever been made possible by just one person, even though it is often be presented as such. It recognizes the

Arch.e's dependence is both a strength and a weakness. We can't do without, it results in some really heartwarming moments, though dependence both builds resilience, and makes the project more fragile. What if the MSI would stop tolerating Recup'Kitchen's presence on Josaphat? What if the financing drops out?

The R-Urban project and its struggle to sustain when the support of the local government in Colombes dropped out, shows how asking help is crucial, challenging and can happen in many forms. Obtaining a significant European funding to make the R-Urban project happen, the AAA practice had also built dependence of the support of the local government to provide them access to several unused sites in Colombes. However, this support dropped at a certain moment (change of local government). An intensive communication campaign asked locals, fellow urban activists and architects to shout out their outrage through a petition. Moreover, a crowdfunding was realized to fund a juridical appeal.

Despite the incredible amount of help that had been received on various levels, the displacement of the R-Urban project became inevitable. Yet this process had helped to enlarge the engaged community, build political power and had triggered other municipalities to actively welcome the project on their territory. There is nothing wrong with being in a fragile position of dependence if you have a great support base. Dependence comes in many forms of which some –certainly not all- can be truly empowering. Watch out with whom you build your alliances and how much you allow yourself to become dependent.

### III. Get quick wins // act III

Once you have obtained the necessary support and funding, it is time to **construct**. This can be pretty overwhelming after the already challenging and very exploratory process the community of commoners have gone through. Where to start? How to not disappoint all those people that have got engaged, how to not lose your face in front of those actors -Modern Architect- that are very sceptic of your commons-oriented vision?

As mentioned in the previous section, it is pretty challenging to have a project to be realized as it is loaded with tons of relational values the community envisage to realize. You do not want to be too slow in order to live up to the expectations. Getting **quick wins** then became a coping technique for the Arch.e. Buying the Recup'Kitchen "roulotte" (the circus wagon in which the kitchen is installed) had been stressful and we definitely made some crucial mistakes. However, having the main structure for the kitchen installed on the Josaphat site, had been a crucial trigger to get the construction process of the project rolling. Seeing something was happening and moving forward definitely made a big part of Recup'Kitchen's realization possible.

This technique relates to many of the other aspects that are brought up in the timeline (TL):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ° Celebrate the milestones                           | ° Allow step by step progress                    |
| ° Follow the seasons                                 | ° Share the moment                               |
| ° Value the small and improvised                     | ° Look for coherence                             |
| ° Do not try to find an answer to all your questions | ° Link the intervention to its underlying vision |
| ° Make the planning together                         | ° Continue, even if it is not perfect            |



This technique mainly thrives of improvisation and a fair share of enthusiasm, engagement and a positive conviction everything will turn out fine. Step by step, by making things happen physically and visually, the performative effect of the work will support the community of commoners to hold on and have the imagined project constructed. Quick wins can already impact and change the perception significantly. The magic of architecture's physical outcomes.

Although we managed to construct the on-site kitchen, Recup'Kitchen would, physically, never deliver the mobile (well designed) kitchen it aspired to be. Mainly due to its collective construction and the large communication campaign that came with obtaining its funding, Recup'Kitchen do would performatively act out what it had promised to be. As a physical aesthetic object it might have been rather disappointing from a conventional -Modern Architect- perspective, it does realize its relational values and impacts through its visual and physical existence. Its rather messy aesthetics, manifest its claim.

Nearly no project is perfectly realized, certainly not those that appear in impressive and sleek magazines. The strength is that the project exists, and is supported by a strong claim and communication that through a strong visualization can bring out the "vision in practice".

The R-Urban project is a good example of this. Although its realized architectural interventions are definitely better designed, the collective garden around the Agrocité hub (when I have visited) had a winterish appearance and needed some caretaking here and there. Moreover the R-Urban project had not been fully realized yet, AAA still had one of its three hubs in the pipeline. Nevertheless R-Urban is a well-known project in the architecture scene and in the field of urban commoning. Pictures of the Agrocité structure as well as the inspiring schemes of the project travel around, are presented in architecture courses or are used as references by students. So yes, it is important that it is made. Then, the better it looks, the more convincing it will get.

So go ahead and work step by step, never stop advancing, making it happen and try to improve along the way.

#### IV. Cross dynamics // act IV

Related to the "act IV" in which the Arch.e invests more strongly in the **caretaking** and on-going activation of the practice by repeating several techniques, the main technique I would like to discuss here is the exploration for how to make several **dynamics cross**.

This technique mainly relies on the Arch.e's capacities to be facilitating, coordinating and networking and in this reveals the creativity and imagination implemented in the bringing together of vision and action, the long term and the ad hoc, the tactical and the strategic, the theory and the practice. This "act IV" not only had been the most fun and rewarding one in the becoming of the Arch.e, its underpinning techniques also most closely link to her core attributes.

Several of the techniques in this act –discussed in the timeline (TL)-, strongly relate to this way of working to bring different facets, disciplines, scales and action and vision to cross:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>° Exchange in different ways, on different levels</li> <li>° It does not always have to be efficient</li> <li>° Be a proud host</li> <li>° Be there to make decisions</li> <li>° Hoover in-between action and theory</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>° Have every actor reach out through their strength / skills</li> <li>° Diversify</li> <li>° Keep the rhythm</li> <li>° A (certain) structural messiness is okay</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

The crossing of dynamics is often achieved quite directly, the organization of the Wasteland festival invites inspiring commons initiatives to present their work while Recup'Kitchen invites people to cook and eat together and the Jardin Latinis organizes a gardening workshop. The actions on the Josaphat ground are transferred to the meetings of Commons Josaphat and its visionary discussion on the future direction of uAD.

The crossing of dynamics also happens in presenting the projects, the people, the ideas behind them. This can happen for a public of urban activists, people visiting the Josaphat site, through lobbying or presenting in academic contexts.

In the previous section, I've already discussed the work of AAA and how our visit –as Commons Josaphat– to their Agrocité hub had made me aware of the power to be found in bringing the intellectual discourse physically to its location and its everyday activities. Similarly the visit at the Prinzessinnengärten in April 2018 revealed the power of crossing several dynamics. We –as Josaph'Aire– visited a, by the Prinzessinnengärten community organized, meeting hosted in the neighborhood to discuss the gentrification pressure the area around the Moritzplatz in Berlin is facing. Later on, we would join one of the meetings related to the “Nachbarschaftsakademie”. Through this seemingly evident action we, looking for exchange and inspiration from abroad, and they, looking to share knowledge within the neighborhood, would connect and cross our perspectives and opinions. It is a not always visible but crucial way to connect our struggle in Brussels –being in the midst of negotiating the convention for temporary use– to the one of Berlin –the Prinzessinnengärten having its contract for temporary use ending soon.

The political and strategic work of the commons uAD practice grounds on different local territories. In line with this, the coming together of the European Commons Assembly has supported the crossing of dynamics on an ever higher, European, level. In the workshop on the “*right to the city*” the everyday struggle and the bigger societal issues that Commons Josaphat and Josaph'Aire are confronted with would show to connect to similar struggles faced by the Prinzessinnengärten, “Stad in de Maak” in Rotterdam (NL) or “Esta es una Plaza” in Madrid (ES).

Place, vision and politics entangle here.

## V. Open up the construction site // act V

The next coping technique of the Arch.e that I would like to describe more in detail is related to her physical **distance** happening in “act V” of her becoming process. As mentioned in the previous section, the main “danger” this absence is to be found in the diminution of **events that bring different agents and communities together** while inviting in “outsiders”.

This combines with the following techniques brought up for this period of time in the TL:

- ° Not everything needs to be done entirely participatory
- ° Connect / relate happenings
- ° Express / show yourself
- ° Explore materials that can be recuperated

- ° Reveal your different faces
- ° Be patient
- ° Be tolerant
- ° Move forward, step-by-step
- ° Bring out your message

As I had been physically away for several months, I had looked to maintain the rhythm of activities, especially the more strategic ones that actively invite newcomers to get to know what you do and might like to help out one way or another. Yet after the “chantier ouvert” event I had given up on this ambition as the organization of this more public moment had also lead to some tensions. It had been an important lesson to understand not everything –such as the physical construction of the Maison des Possibles- necessarily needs to happen in a participatory manner. However, today I would come back to this letting go of my ambition to make the building of the Maison an open and more inclusive process. I guess also here the balance is to be found in the in-between.

It is crucial to have resting moments –for Josaphat often during the winter period- and to have some of the physical work pragmatically been done by a select group of experienced builders. However, you need to keep the process –if only by talking about it- open. A strong way to achieve this is to work towards a bigger, more public event that nudges the different existing agents to come together and collaborate in its organization. Moreover, it makes the communities find common ground in collectively reaching out to “outsiders”, welcoming them and sharing the own action by presenting the underlying vision. Communicating externally forces the community to sharpen the message and articulate more clearly which direction is aimed for.

I would say that letting go of pushing for such more public events, has been a mistake. In combination with the politics that came to play out more explicitly in the following phases, this allowed for an unhealthy in-crowd of local actors –missing out on the bigger importance of Josaphat for Brussels- and resulted in growing internal tensions. I also believe this actively reaching out would have been a potential counter action for the loss of direction and common vision we had encountered in later phases of the commons uAD practice as it evolved on and around Josaphat.

In a similar way, yet of equal importance, this technique had been implemented by Petra Pferdmenges to open up the Parckfarm project through the Farmtruck. The mobile kitchen / workshop space / cinema allowed to go and visit other related farming projects and nearby public space. The truck would go outside and present what was happening on the Parckfarm site. The Farmtruck functioned as a vehicle for exchange beyond the scope of the original project. Related to the crossing of dynamics –which plays out on various levels and scales- this opening up of the (construction) site allows to have the locally anchored action and vision reach out.

## VI. Structuralize // act VI & VII

Another crucial coping technique of the Arch.e emerges both in “act VI” where things growingly become **political** and “act VII” where the **struggle** becomes the most fierce. In both these phases of her becoming, the Commons Architect.e has encountered the

need to limit openness and try to counter the internal and external questioning of the community's legitimization.

Looking to face these challenges a **structuralization** process has been undertaken, which relates to several other techniques that are implemented throughout the sixth and seventh act:

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>° Don't wait for permission</li><li>° Keep in touch with the outsider perspective</li><li>° Remain grounded in your context</li><li>° Be aware of what is behind an intervention</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>° Welcome new projects</li><li>° Maneuver through administrative rules and limits</li><li>° Use every occasion to continue the debate</li><li>° Expertise exists in many forms</li></ul> |
|--|--|

Structuralizing might have a nasty taste in the urban activist scene, but (urban) commons do not come without a clear set of rules and guidelines that make up the commoning, nor the clear engagement of a community of commoners. So, as you are looking to gain your place within the neoliberalist mechanisms you are questioning, go and do not be afraid to employ the instruments through which Economic Man and Modern Architect act.

Part of this structuralizing process is the creation of the Josaph'Aire nonprofit, the requesting of a building permit for the Maison des Possibles and the working toward a convention for temporary use with the MSI. An increasing amount of time is dedicated to writing bylaws, finding the needed documents within the Brussels complex administrative jumble and doing research on the law on conventions for temporary use.

These are not the most fun tasks, but are very necessary in the maturing of the collective project. And from my experience on and around Josaphat, I suggest to set these structuralizing techniques in work as early as possible. There is more important and fun work to be done than to defend your legitimization that is undermined from the outside as you have not managed to build a clearly structured framework from the inside. Watch out though, this does not require to go and swing completely to the other side. Remain open to a certain amount of dissensus and (self-)criticism, yet openness stops at a certain point. A clear structure and decision-making mechanisms are indispensable. Moreover, openness should not be confused with transparency. In order to remain legitimate while limiting the openness, documentation and transparency are crucial.

A seemingly evident insight related to this technique has been brought to me by our fellow activists of the Prinzessinnengärten. Marco Clausen would bluntly provoke me by questioning why I myself would describe our work as being "temporary". He pointed out that we should not wait for other people to grant us a recognition as transitional agents, it is necessary to make this claim ourselves first. I realized Marco's remark is also relevant to how we position Josaph'Aire and its underlying structuralizing. Josaph'Aire should be manifested as the strong collective identity I believe it could become. Also in the very structuralizing process, the performative is at stake.

## VII. Take care seriously // act VI & VII

The organization and creation of agreements and rules that are necessary to have **caretaking** valued as an indispensable part of the urban commoning. A good social and

physical caretaking is crucial to remain respectful, yet often this aspect remains overlooked.

I would thus like to recognize this caretaking as a crucial coping technique of the Arch.e, along other techniques that are discussed in the timeline that reconstructs the main events and actions of the design-based participatory action research:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ◦ The digital world is but a useful tool     | ◦ Food is always a good starter                          |
| ◦ Be precise in what you ask for             | ◦ A sheltered space allows for concentration of energies |
| ◦ Go back to the ground                      | ◦ Organize to take care / for maintenance                |
| ◦ Present, show, facilitate                  | ◦ Improve incrementally                                  |
| ◦ Appreciate the tactility, the technicality |  |

This “take care seriously” technique implies –among others- literally cleaning up the mess other people leave behind. It might sound banal, but I have spent significant time cleaning Recup’Kitchen’s roulotte, having the garbage sorted, preparing a space before a meeting... I also have spent a significant amount of time listening to fellow actors expressing their concerns and frustrations (whether or not directly linked to people leaving some spaces behind as a mess). It sometimes requires enduring simplistic and outright insulting comments on your own address, yet more often addressed to others who are not present to explain the situation. I should admit that I myself, like all of us, have been guilty of neglecting some crucial caretaking work from time to time.

A collective solution has been found in the “Jour des Communs”. Let’s invest in the caretaking together, make it into an event and connect some pleasant activities around it. It has been quite a success in the beginning. Having a lot of the actors come together on Josaphat on the same day made that many agreements and rules would be set out and shared informally. Yet as there was nobody who could dedicate the energy, time and/or commitment to be there every month, let be to take up the necessary communication and coordination it required, this monthly day of caretaking died out.

A more structuralized working with clear agreements could enforce the engagement to take part in physical caretaking tasks and the related discussion that would emerge around it. After all, claiming a place on this commons-based shared land, requires a minimal dedication. But in this phase (before April 2018) Josaph’Aire had not obtained nor claimed its internal nor external legitimization.

Another technique to make caretaking become valued more seriously is the idea of having a concierge for Josaphat. This is loosely inspired by the case of Parckfarm where a, in the park inhabiting, homeless person grew a strong affinity to the project and spontaneously took up an important role in maintaining and guarding the different interventions that had been installed for the biennale event. Unfortunately it seemed that this kind of engagement was impossible to structuralize for the involved regional administration. The idea of having a community of people living at Josaphat and –in return- offering to invest in the collective caretaking- seems like a technique that could help to cope with the challenges we are facing on Josaphat’s ground. However, cautiousness is required to not take advantage of people that are in a fragile position.

For the eight act in the becoming of the Commons Architect.e, the technique of “**bit-ing, not destroying**” supports the overall aim to **push through the taken direction** after a connecting vision has been recovered.

This coping technique emerges from the desire to reinforce the transitional ambitions of the commons uAD practice and to gain a stronger political and strategic position. Taking up a stronger composing and visualizing role –not coincidentally happening simultaneously with the creation of the written account of the doctorate- this technique is combined with several other techniques that are brought up in the timeline (TL):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ° Bring what you do to other locations / dislocate | ° Don't avoid friction when it is there   |
| ° Get in confrontation                             | ° Accept the paradox: the political is at the defense of the innovative everyday, yet the everyday struggles over / is aloof to the political |
| ° Visualize / imagine                              | ° Look at it from different angles  |
| ° Change the question, find focus                  |   |
| ° Be honest, share your failures                   |   |

Relating more to the commons-oriented vision, the underlying narrative becomes stronger again. Simultaneously, a pragmatic ambition opens up a willingness to dialogue and compromise as we continue to strategically advance. Fighting off criticism and continuing the already initiated work, despite the still present tensions, has been mainly a reactive response to avoid complete standstill.

In contrast to the very first actions as occurred within the technique “to act small and shout out loud”, I, in this phase had been more aware of all the potential impacts certain decisions might have. This can have a paralyzing effect, yet at this point a complete standstill was our biggest threat; internal debates were running in circles. It is time to recover the vision and manifest our ambitions and goals from that little common ground we have managed to bring up again.

There are too many other important aspects, like the larger importance of Josaphat for our city. The convention for temporary use would be the first of its kind for the MSI. The stakes here are too valuable to miss this opportunity because we are too occupied by internal debates. Nor should we allow to become overwhelmed by the rather fierce approach of the MSI and agree on requirements that are principally unacceptable. It is time to show our teeth, though without losing our constructive attitude.

The exemplary cases of urban commoning of the Prinzessinnengärten and R-Urban both have significantly more experience in biting off threatening conditions. The Prinzessinnengärten has multiple times faced the ending of their convention for using their ground. Yet now, after they have several times managed to enforce the prolonging of the contract, a dislocation seems to be inevitable. Likewise the R-Urban project had to face its expulsion from its sites in Colombes. The political debate and strategic maneuvering reached a state where biting off became insufficient. For both cases the choice was made to fiercely continue the struggle for the right of the city. As no potential for collaboration had been left, the bridges had been burned.

Personally I find it comforting to know this more destructive technique is in the tool box. It is important to believe in your political power and the strength of your discourse, Yet as long as the situation allows for it, I consciously chose to dialogue and compromise.



## IX. Look at the horizon // act IX

As “act IX” transcends the “here and now” scope of this written account –reaching beyond June 2018-, it is hard to reflect upon this phase and the techniques employed within it. The uncertain continuation of the Arch.e’s becoming is increasingly focusing on **protecting and reviving** the everyday convivial atmosphere. This is obtained by a future-oriented investment in the organization of more strategic, public, events that allow to cross dynamics (Faire project).

The convention for temporary use has finally been signed and the burden of the responsibilities that come with it can be clearly felt. In the meanwhile, my engagement as an Arch.e becomes uncertain as this doctoral research and design practice is coming to its end. As external recognition has been obtained, the Josaph’Aire community can try to recover from the unsettling effects the negotiation process had triggered. This moment offers a whole range of opportunities while it simultaneously demands to get some essential things in order (as illustrated by the necessity to close Josaphat’s entrance gate and the door of the Maison).

From where the Arch.e stands now, things seem to be able to go in any direction again. Yet the upcoming Faire project and the imaginations and ambitions that underlie it reveal a last coping technique; keeping the **eyes on the horizon**. Hope and enthusiasm is to be found in an imagined project you long for.

With the Faire project I have obtained funding to, temporarily, professionalize a supporting and facilitating role. Although only project based, the employment of a person to support the coming together of the local communities as well as to help to reach out to other urban activist practices beyond Josaphat is a first step in this ambition. A structural funding is necessary on the long term.

In this context, I believe a lot can be learned from the R-Urban project that had managed to create several job opportunities. Likewise the Prinzessingärten has managed to employ a core team and seasonal workers by generating income from the activities they host on their site. I believe that after the strong political work the Josaph’Aire community has established, it might be time to explore its economic potential.

### 00.08.03 Ten guidelines to give her space

After defining the act's in the becoming of the Commons Architect.e, I have described ten of the coping techniques she has developed throughout her uAD practice. In the last part of the previous section I have hinted at a possible technique that would support the sustaining of the Josaph'Aire project and with this potentially the becoming of the Arch.e. However, apart from exploring ways to obtain structural funding –which is going to be an adventure on its own- I would in this section like to focus on other ways that might foster the further development of the Commons Architect.e within the Brussels uAD scene.

Starting from the insight from the design-based participatory action research, I will provide ten guidelines for how mainly public actors could nudge the becoming of the Arch.e. Considering the symbolic and symptomatic value of Josaphat for Brussels uAD scene, these guidelines provide tools, methods and approaches that would be relevant for the Brussels Capital Region at large. As the third wave of citizen involvement in urban planning manifests, also beyond Brussels a search for an altering uAD practice is exploring to gain ground. These guidelines also aim to inspire other city administrations, practitioners, citizens, urban activists, governments... to implement tools, methods and approaches that create more space for the altering agency embodied by the Commons Architect.e.

These ten guidelines are not solid, well advanced tools, techniques or approaches. Rather, they are open proposals that should be further developed, researched and explored. The implementation of each of them could be a research project on its own and requires a (trial-and-error) testing to fine-tune them to the complex Brussels context.

These guidelines offer ways to foster an altering approach in uAD. Their success will be highly dependent on the way they are implemented and by whom. Each in their way, these guidelines can provide a framework that will nudge the Arch.e to grow and develop her agency in the uAD scene. These guidelines require a (political) willingness to offer more space for the altering attitude of the Commons Architect.e who aims to create a better quality of life and support democratization through urban architectural design.

An important note here is that here the Arch.e is to be understood beyond my personal agency. She needs to be perceived as the unheroic model for an altering uAD practice that is driven by a (be)longing; the desire to invest in quality of life and a democratization processes through uAD. Aiming to contribute to the uAD scene around Josaphat, Brussels and Europe and beyond, these guidelines require further investigation to be operationalized within a specific urban context.

The ten listed guidelines mix concrete tools and methods with more general proposals for how to alter the current approach that is personalized by Modern Architect. Mixing different scales of implication and fields of action, they are not ordered according to importance. For the specific case of Josaphat / Brussels some guidelines occur as the most fundamental and as such the most striking –yet not always most feasible- to advance. Other guidelines provide more concrete proposals for instruments, methods and approaches that can be implemented sufficiently quickly and would have a more direct impact on the field. Some guidelines blend both.

	fundamental	concrete
1. Strong vision and strategy through co-creation	x	
2. The necessity of transitional use for urban innovation	x	
3. Think beyond the price in public tenders		x
4. Permis de faire		x
5. Contract-based instrument for public-civic collaboration		x
6. Poking in the existing governance	x	x
7. In-house agents pushing civic participation	x	x
8. Micro-financing		x
9. Transparency in planning processes	x	
10. Work at a human scale / grain	x	x



## 1. Strong vision and strategy through co-creation

It has been discussed in section 00.05.01 “*A familiar struggle*”, for many of its (activist) citizens, the Brussels Capital Region shows to have a weak or even no vision on the urban development of its city. Or rather there have been too many, not persevered, visions for Brussels that hinder a clear and coherent overall strategy (Doucet, 2007).

Apart from looking to play along according to the neoliberalist mechanisms that push for profit-driven development and the commodification of livelihoods, there seems to be no coherent strategy in the functioning of the different –functionally divided- Regional planning administrations (ARAU, IEB, & BRAL, 2017; ARAU, IEB, BRAL, et al., 2017). However, it has to be said, Brussels is a particular challenge (Doucet, 2015b).

The leading discourse of the MSI stresses the need for affordable housing as over 40.000 families are on the waiting list for social housing. Fair enough, this is an accurate and pressing need and also the claim that Brussels will face a demographic growth is founded. What remains foggy however, is how the Region aims to tackle this urgency and what vision is perused. There are many different ways in which affordable housing can be realized. Why is the development of post-industrial wastelands prioritized over the renovation of the vast stock of vacant buildings? Which vision underlies this choice?

Being aware the MSI is the Region’s development cooperation, it is no secret that for them developing housing equally seems to be an investment. So, is the vision then profit-driven? How much does that aspect still aligns with the public interest the MSI needs to serve? Modern Architect is starting to show his face. The current attitude in the necessary development of affordable housing takes on an approach of “allocating people”. Are we not bypassing the fact that housing entails the everyday urban environment in which people live?

So what if the visioning process would be opened up a bit more? Maybe citizens could be given more voice in order to involve their lived experience? The sustainable neighborhood contracts in Brussels show it is possible to structuralize a representation of citizens and local interest groups who live the aimed for result these projects orient at. After all the “intellectual bobo’s” and the “NIMBY<sup>19</sup> neighbors” reveal some crucial concerns that are not always taken into account in the current planning processes. Isn’t it about time to also enforce the lived perspective at the regional planning level?

<sup>19</sup> Not In My BackYard

There is still significant opportunity for improvement. Apart from having an obligatory check-up moment as already established with the public inquiry, participation could definitely happen earlier in the urban development process (UNECE, 1998). The base for (participatory) urban architectural design should be laid through a strong co-created vision and related strategy.

Currently, the situation does not look very promising though. The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (GDPO/PRDD) has missed the opportunity to include the perspective of those living in Brussels. And apart from being heavily criticized for its general lack of vision, this weak vision-oriented document is already being bypassed. The GDPO still needs to be approved while the strategic master plans (RPA/PAD) for the most important strategic zones of Brussels are already on the table.

None of the RPA's have been made operational so far and the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development has to be revised; this opens a window of opportunity. It is not too late to co-create a strong vision for Brussels urban development that would significantly take into account the perspective of "those that are inhabiting" to complement the approach of "those that are allocating". However, this will require a strong political choice from the ruling government.

It seems an open door, but for Brussels it is still implausibly innovative; let's co-create a strong urban architectural design vision for the Brussels Capital Region. Let's discuss how we can realize affordable housing, a strong ecological network, fluent mobility, sustainable economy...



## 2. The necessity of transitional use for urban innovation

The (co-)creation of a strong vision might be more feasible within the scope of temporary / transitional use in urban architectural design. This can be realized within the Region's urban planning administrations. The Parckfarm example already illustrated how a regional administration such as Leefmilieu Brussel is building experience. In addition, both Perspective and the Bouwmeester (chief architect) have in-house experts on the subject. Also the MSI, as rather new actor, is exploring the opportunities of the temporary and transitional. However the recent debate on transitional use in urban planning that had been organized by Brussels Academy, BRAL and Toestand (2018) reveals a strong visionary direction is missing.

The discussion evolved around the questions if temporary use of public spaces should help to address the primary needs of our city and/or it should function as a laboratory for the future of the city. The civic actors around the table would call to protect and prioritize social-oriented temporary use of public space. Moreover, actors such as Toestand are at the defense to value the temporary available spaces in our city as places where failure and making a mess are still allowed. After all, how else can we provide a learning space to explore other ways of city making and urban production?

In the debate, the representative of the MSI stressed that they feel a strong pressure to apply to all the norms and rules, including the obligation for public actors to have a public tender. Moreover, it cannot be the ambition to try to solve structural issues through temporary use. This statement is affirmed by the representative of Perspective and the cabinet of the Region's minister-president. The Region, and with it the MSI, its priority is to develop long term solid solutions for the pressing housing need. Tempo-

rary use is but an infill closing the gap and helping to prepare the ground for the future development of a site or a building.

The representatives of the Bouwmeester and the business-oriented temporary users would stress that in the competition for a public tender the price should not be the main criteria to decide on which actor obtains the right to temporarily / transitional manage a public space. In general, the content of the type of use should be valued more. And here again, the need of a clear vision and strategy occurs. What else would legitimize a public actor to favor certain type of temporary / transitional use over others?

In his closing reflection on the debate, Eric Corijn provided a nice lead for what such a vision could be (Brussels Academy et al., 2018). He demonstrates that indeed the transitional should not try to solve structural issues by providing temporary solutions. The strategic potential of temporary use is situated in the innovative and experimental space it offers. Transitional use (and no longer temporary) evolves around exploring another way (altering) of living and housing. It is in this transitional space that altering societal (commons-oriented) models can flourish. The transitional offers the free space (including a loosening of rules) to invent novel ways of living and producing the future of our city.

This resonates with a recent study led by Evelyne Deceur for the city of Ghent (Deceur & Stad Gent, 2018). Evelyne researches the role of the “neighborhood management” (buurtbeheer) and the benefits it might bring to the city. Focusing on the Rabot district, she has –among others- analyzed the effects some projects had that initiated from temporary /transitional use. Looking at exemplar cases such as “de site” and the “Boerenhof”, she defines several advantages of including citizens in the programing, designing and maintenance of public spaces in the city (Deceur, Maes, & Van Reusel, 2018). These act out in three main facets of space, which –in line with what Eric Corijn suggests for Brussels- provide a useful starting point from which to co-create a strong vision on transitional use.

Deceur discusses the physical importance of a space; leading to visual improvement of public spaces and the lowering of vandalism. The second facet is focusing on the social impact; space can help to build social cohesion, appropriation, diversity and stewardship. The third facet addresses the symbolic importance of public urban spaces. What happens in urban space is connected to broader urban issues and governance. What happens in the public space on the small scale can have an impact on broader and long term issues.

### 3. Think beyond the budget in public tenders

Strongly related to the discussion considering the value of transitional use, is the suggestion to have public tender competitions to be focused on content rather than on the budget. In the by Brussels Academy, Toestand and BRAL (2018) organized debate on the role of transitional use in planning, Frédéric Serroen –representing the Bouwmeester team- has addressed it several times; choosing the cheapest offer often does not lead to the most interesting result.

Frédéric suggests to fix the budget for public tender applications and then choose the best offer based on the content that can be offered in return. This suggestion is backed up by other participants of the debate, among which also a representative of an business

working on profit-driven temporary use. Dries Vanneste (Entrakt) has witnessed how in other cities a mere at the cheapest offer oriented assignment of temporary use management of public buildings has led to a complete erosion of its social, creative and artistic potential.

In his concluding note, also Eric Corijn picks up on this point. He emphasizes the need to loosen the rules in Brussels (let go of Modern Architect's obsession for the predictable), especially in the framework of temporary / transitional use. In addition, it is time to think beyond the open market principles embodied by the current way of organizing public tenders.



#### 4. Permis de faire

A concrete suggestion to support the loosening of the rather smothering, though necessary rules in the field of uAD can be found in a legal opening for urban experimentation. An intriguing example of this is the “permis de faire” that is being explored in France (Vincendon). Unfortunately it is still too early to see what this potential opening in the legal framework for urban planning could lead to, yet the idea sparks inspiration.

Also in Brussels a small gap already exists. There is a legal possibility to be exempted from the need to have a building permit for a to university research related structure.

However, the vision –again the vision– behind this article unfortunately is approached rather pragmatic and accordingly, the regional urbanism administration had refused to grant this exemption for the construction of the Maison des Possibles. Even though the construction was a temporary unit that was related to academic research –and thus fitted the legal description– the project was rather arbitrary<sup>20</sup> judged insufficiently related to a clear university framework.

A search for control has closed this gap for a loosening of the framework. And as Eva Fonteyn, as representative of the MSI in the debate on transitional use, has stressed, it is indeed necessary to be cautious (Brussels Academy et al., 2018). The free space that is provided within the temporary should not be abused to bypass norms and regulations. This could lead to the continuation of the practice as usual, though without taking up the responsibility and safety measures that are enforced by the rules.

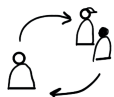
A strong underlying vision would also in this case provide crucial support to define in which specific, innovation-oriented, situations a more open framework could temporarily be allowed.

Knowing the Region has an innovative research funding program (Co-Create) that supports living lab based research in Brussels in which academia is nudged to work together with Brussels actors, this could provide a nice lead to allow the existing juridical gap to be implemented in this context. After all, these, by the Brussels Capital Region funded, research projects have already undergone a selection procedure that assesses both its scientific and societal value.

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20 Despite the by my supervisor signed and by the Faculty of Architecture valorized letter expressing the relation between the construction of the Maison des Possibles and this doctoral research, the Brussels Capital Region's urbanism department judged there was insufficient prove the structure had a direct relation to academic research. Later on the jurist Nicolas Bernard, with an expertise on conventions for temporary use in Brussels, would tell me I would have had the juridical ground to question this decision.





## 5. Contract-based instrument for public-civic collaboration

Apart from creating a more loosened framework within urbanism's regulations, more freedom for experimentation can paradoxically also be fostered through the creation of an additional regulated framework. Earlier in this written account<sup>21</sup> I have brought up the in Bologna pioneered "*local regulation on collaboration between citizens and the municipality to care, regenerate and reuse urban commons*" (Ciaffi & Saporito, 2017; Comune di Bologna, 2015).

This contract-based instrument provides a clear framework that encourages both the local administration and citizens to collaborate in using and taking care of publicly owned spaces. Such a framework would empower civic agents that already spontaneously claim spaces in favor of the common interest (as happening at Josaphat), but would also stimulate less organized agents to join the action. Moreover, this research would be helpful for temporary and transitional use, though would also benefit many other types of extended uses like the use of a school's sports hall after school hours.



## 6. Poking in the existing governance

Another inspiring suggestion that can be derived from what is happening in Bologna, is the "technical unit for civic imagination" (LabGov.City, 2018a). As the City of Bologna pioneered with the "urban commons regulation" this innovative experiment had been guided and overseen by this "technical unit". Consisting of civil servants of the city and experts on the topics of urban commons and commons governance, this unit not only proved useful to guard the urban innovation process. Apart from guiding the creation of prototypes, the "technical unit for civic imagination" also allowed to explore a transformation in the city government.

In Brussels, such a unit might be a helpful support for developing a clear (ideally co-created) vision. Moreover, it could support both the Region's planning administration and Brussels lively scene of urban activism to find a common ground and work toward collaboration.



## 7. In-house agents pushing civic participation

Related to the suggestion to explore the potential of implementing a "technical unit for civic imagination", it is relevant to consider how knowledge and expertise on participation in urban architectural design can be stronger embedded within the Region's administrations.

Having many regional administrations for urban planning in the Brussels Capital Region, it is surprising to see there is no working group, department or expert dedicated to participation or including the lived perspective of those who live and work in Brussels. Apart from Leefmilieu Brussel that has one strong personality that is pushing from within the administration for a more innovative stance to including citizens in the urban planning and co-creation of green spaces, no ambitious nor on this topic specialized person seems to be present. Or at least these people are not visible.

<sup>21</sup> See section 00.04.01.b "Acting along the commons claim".

The MSI, as the Region's urban development cooperation, has its team members organized according to the development cases and not according to disciplinary expertise. The team of the Bouwmeester, which has in-house expertise on temporary use, however, has no one whose biography is characterized by experience with participation in uAD. And although the team of the Bouwmeester shows to be sensitive to the matter of open communication in planning processes and civic participation in urbanism, they do not see it as their role to force space for this within the current urban planning situation in Brussels (Borret & Serroen, 2018).

Most strikingly, Perspective as the Region's center of expertise and instigator for development strategies for the territory of the Brussels Capital Region, neither seems to have a profiled participation expert in their team. However, this regional body is responsible for the information and participation sessions considering the ten upcoming big urban development projects in Brussels (among which Josaphat).

Ghent's "wijkregisseur" (district director<sup>22</sup>) is an inspiring example. Even though this is an actor that mainly works at the local level to sense opportunities and to provide support. The most interesting aspect is the autonomy this actor has within the city administration. Not being directly linked to one alderman, the "wijkregisseur" provides a transdisciplinary service. In the case of the urban activism around the Boerenhof in Ghent, the district director informed the municipal actors about the frustrations and proposals of the local inhabitants, he provided me –as architecture student– insight in the internal working of the city's administrations and had an important role in internal lobbying to influence the political decision on the future destination of what later would become the Boerenhof park. As he was not depending on one alderman nor one administrative service, he had the liberty to cause some "internal trouble". The "wijkregisseur" had played a crucial role in supporting the (be)longing.

In combination with the example of the earlier discussed "technical unit of civic imagination", a transversal unit to support participation, commoning and / or civic involvement in urban architectural design can be imagined. Especially, as the Brussels Capital Region is now facing a new Cobat (Brussels planning instrument) and the plans for the ten big urban projects (RPA/PAD) still need to be operationalized, it now is a strategic moment to consider setting up a unit that would support an innovative exploration to search better quality of life and democratization through urban architectural design.



## 8. Micro financing

The "urban commons regulation" has also been launched in Turin. The kick off of the project had been stimulated through an open call for proposal. A selection of the submitted ideas had been granted a small financial support from the City of Turin and / or a Foundation (Fondazione Cascina Roccafranca) (Rete delle case del quartiere, 2017). Providing rather small budgets for financial support, the implementation of this project has mainly led to building social capital (LabGov.City, 2018b).

A similar example of micro financing by a local government can be found in Ghent where the municipality subsidizes small scale neighborhood projects through the "wijk

<sup>22</sup> Within the "Refill" UrbAct project the "wijkregisseur" has been translated as "neighborhood manager". However, I do not like this translation as the original Dutch concept relates to coordination, networking and organization. Moreover, the notion of the "director" relates to a leadership in an artistic play. From my experience in Ghent, this is more close to the actual agency of the "wijkregisseur".

aan zet” project (Stad Gent, 2018). Setting the maximum budget at 2500 euro, locals can quite easily apply for a budget to support the organization of an action or event for their neighborhood. This budget that is granted after a selection by a “neighborhood jury” has allowed to (minimally) support projects of urban activism. In the specific case of the Boerenhof, the activist neighbors had obtained a subsidy to build a greenhouse on this awaiting space even though the municipality was still planning for it to become a parking space (Van Reusel, 2014).

In Brussels the “Quartiers durables citoyens” / “Participatieve duurzame wijken” project by Leefmilieu Brussel also provides micro financing (up to 15.000 euro) and even offers punctual facilitation support (Leefmilieu Brussel, 2018). Also on Josaphat, the Jardin Latinis garden received support (for realizing a greenhouse by the way). What if a regional administration responsible for urban planning would invest in such a micro-financing for innovative uAD interventions?

It might seem insignificant but providing such a small financial support, and tolerating that this might benefit critical, though constructive urban activism is of incredible value to support altering uAD practices.



## 9. Transparency in planning processes

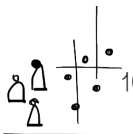
Another seemingly evident suggestion to create space for an altering –commons-oriented- approach in uAD, is to open up the publicly led governance of urban architectural design through transparency.

In the case of Josaphat, the Comité de Site Josaphat is struggling to obtain access to the masterplan (RPA/PAD) and the environment impact study. Although, these plans are already drawn, there seems to be some secret to them. In the meanwhile, the MSI is confident that they can justify every strategic decision they have made. And this might be completely true, though it becomes difficult to believe when the plans remain behind closed doors and public discussions are avoided.

In addition, urban activist like Commons Josaphat try to not counter but constructively build onto the already made plans for Josaphat. And although these civic agents are critical of certain foundational points –like the fierce privatization of the land- their constructive ambition is knotted by a lack of access to what the Brussels Capital Region has already decided and planned. So what more is there left than to speculate or to work on a counter project?

The “amour de secret” is strongly anchored in Brussels’ attitude in uAD (Borret & Serroen, 2018). The history of Brusselization, the strong urban activism that it had triggered, and the complex tangle of public actors have made behind-closed-door decision-making a still highly popular practice (Doucet, 2015c). Paradoxically, this eagerness to move forward more efficiently (Modern Architect) results in suspicion and opposition.

Transparency would help to gain trust and would support to build confidence in the capacities of the Region’s administrations. Rather than having citizens and urban activists investing their energy in trying to obtain access to information or more commonly blocking the planning process through the public inquiry, transparency would give them the space to constructively seek to improve the pending plans.



## 10. Work at a human scale / grain

Last but certainly not least, I will build on to the proposal that has been made by Commons Josaphat; can an urban site like Josaphat not be developed in smaller building lots that would allow for civic actors to step in the urban development of their city? Commons Josaphat has lobbied for this through its work on the “îlot modèle”; a concrete proposal for a commons-oriented building block.

Referring to exemplar cases like the “baugruppen” in Germany and the civic development organizations in Switzerland, Commons Josaphat has developed architectural and financial schemes in a co-creative manner to prove Brussels is ready to host similar projects that prioritize quality of the life in uAD.

Smaller building plots would, apart from making urban development happen at the reach of organized citizen groups, also counter the de-urbanization (Sassen, 2015) that leads to the erosion of the urban environment.

The Bouwmeester has supported this suggestion for Josaphat (Borret & Serroen, 2018) and MSI has expressed a willingness to explore this option for the second development phase of Josaphat. Although slowly, things might already be shifting in a more favorable direction to offer space to the Commons Architect.e.

## 00.08.04 Concluding discussion

In this chapter, I have looked to closer describe the persona for the Commons Architect.e. I have done this by discussing her process of becoming as it has evolved on Josaphat's ground throughout the doctoral research and design practice (00.08.01). In addition, I have highlighted one coping technique in relation to each of the ten "acts" that make up her becoming (00.08.02). These techniques consist of concrete methods for specific challenges with which the Arch.e is confronted in her uAD practice. Building on to the political agency of the Arch.e and her altering practice, I have furthermore provided ten guidelines that could offer her more space within the Brussels Capital Region (00.08.03). These are rather open guidelines that need to be further developed. They provide fundamental and/or concrete handles to foster an altering –commons-oriented– uAD practice of (be)longing.

In addition, I have visually brought together the ten acts of the becoming of the architect and the ten related coping techniques. Moreover, this scheme of the Arch.e's becoming (MAP) lists the ten guidelines.

a. Here she is, the Commons Architect.e

The persona of **the Commons Architect.e** and her becoming, as described in this chapter, represent the doctoral research and design practice its exploratory search for how I –as architect, researcher and urban activist– can –through my set of skills– support communities in their search for a commons-oriented direction in uAD in Brussels.

The Commons Architect.e acts as an unheroic model to manifest the potential of an everyday –commons– architectural practice aimed at the development of resilient and integrated urban places and/or neighborhoods. The Arch.e embodies an altering uAD practice, and equally manifests the tentative exploration and becoming of this critical spatial practitioner.

The Commons Architect.e is an anti-hero who both in a humble and fierce way claims her spot in order to alter the dominant position of Modern Architect and his proclaimed discourse. Her becoming is characterized by the exploratory manner in which she builds her practice. She strongly values her practice for its everyday atmosphere and commons-oriented ambition that are respectively embedded in a hands-on local practice and a theoretical underpinning. She is critical of the neoliberal practices in uAD that result into a loss of quality of life and a lack of transparency.

As a political agent, she recognizes an ongoing (commons) movement of small scale, self-organized and constructive urban activism in which she situates her practice. In support of these, the Arch.e fights her cause to establish a critical turning point in the Brussels uAD scene.

Her altering practice is identified by a playful approach to imaginations, a performative agency, a strong appreciation of the *lebendige* and a particular form of aesthetics. The commons uAD approach manifests itself through an entangled and process-oriented co-creation (architecting), a serendipitous approach to the design process (wandering), a loosening of her authority in design (commoning governance) and an opportunistic and pragmatic approach in order to reach results (finding funding). The

Arch.e situates her practice in multiple sites of actions, where the social, political, built and more entangle and stratify. In all of this, the uncertain and continuously shuffling transitional space makes her comfort zone. Her altering being covers a wide range of, adjectives that traditionally in our western society are perceived as feminine. The whole cluster of adjectives nevertheless illustrate the Arch.e's messy being; she is humble, informal, caring, networking... but doesn't respect disciplinary boundaries and cutely transgresses certain rules.

Her altering becoming reveals how she is an anti-hero, a model that is still forming and claims but a place among other actors. Her persona is not a guidebook but a still ongoing exploration of an everyday and altering approach to uAD, (be)longing at resilient and integrated urban spaces.

## b. An exploratory search in the everyday

The being of the Commons Architect.e has developed through four years of design-based participatory action research. Her being is still in process of becoming and will trespass beyond the "here and now" of this dissertation.

The Arch.e's **exploratory search** to support communities to develop a commons-oriented direction in Brussels' uAD has been in the "making". More than hundred actions and events -as summarized in the timeline (TL)- have made it possible to research, practice, adapt, evolve, question, mature... an altering stance in the practice of urban architectural design.

This "making" is embedded **in the everyday atmosphere**. The critical spatial practice of the Arch.e does not aim for sudden spectacular changes or large scale innovative interventions. She looks for grand change in the small and the everyday. The house, the garden, the kitchen, et cetera. A multiplicity of local and embedded interventions at micro level aim to mark a performative altering in urban architectural design.

The Arch.e's explorative search in the everyday "making" is situated on Josaphat. As fertile breeding ground for urban activism, Josaphat provides both a symbolic and a symptomatic foundation from which to relate to Brussels' broader uAD scene. This ground hosts a combined civic and academic living lab in which the critical altering practice could explore its becoming and in which the architect-research could act and research from an insider's perspective. The knowledges –plural- obtained here are situated (Haraway, 1988); local, partial and critical.

Josaphat, as the ground of the Arch.e's becoming, does not stand alone. Exemplar cases of urban commons such as Parckfarm, R-Urban and the Prinzessinnengärten each in their way host an altering approach to the current state of affairs in uAD. R-Urban and Parckfarm started off from a more clearly formulated program that had financing and collaborations with public partners included, yet all three share an initial –urban activist- aspiration to change the state of affairs by doing –making- things differently in a strategic urban context. They develop their aspired changes around everyday activities such as gardening and cooking. Those house-garden-and-kitchen activities then inextricable link back to crucial facets of life and the city; food production, relation to nature, community building, local economy, et cetera.

These three exemplary practices share Josaphat's strong performative nature. Moreover, they are located at similar sites of actions and skillfully take advantage of the opportu-



nities provided by a transitional positioning (the where and when of the commons uAD practice).

In comparison, the practice hosted at Josaphat –and with it the Commons Architect.e– still is situated in an early phases of commoning that still needs to further mature. Josaphat's strategic positioning, as area of regional interest that is awaiting to become an entire new district, , adds on a unique potential. Inspired by the exemplar cases of Parckfarm, R-Urban and the Prinzessinnengärten, Josaphat could provide the ground to advance the becoming of the Arch.e. Its air is loaded with the potential to manifest a practice of urban commoning at unseen scale and/or to mark a significant pivotal change in Brussels uAD scene.

The, at Josaphat situated, persona of the Commons Architect.e provides but a model in-progress of a critical altering practice. Her contribution to the field lies in the explicit articulation of her patterns, adjectives, acts and techniques. Through four years of actions and events (of which around hundred of them listed in the timeline), ten main phases –acts– can be defined in the Arch.e's exploratory becoming. These acts outline a track of combined research and design practice from which the obtained insights do not provide a ready-to-implement guidebook.

This journey has resulted in the explicit articulation and documentation of several **key concepts** that flirt with theory and make up the consistency of the altering practice. These concepts, among others, reveal the being –patterns and adjectives– and becoming –acts and techniques– of the Commons Architect.e. The patterns, adjectives, acts and techniques aim to provide insights in tactical and strategic methods applied in the “making” of urban commons. The whole set of concepts, listed in the glossary, can be tested, shared or dismissed according to the specific situated context in which they are implemented.

In addition, a set of guidelines aims to support the Commons Architect.e in her ambition to make the hypothetical next turning point in Brussels' urbanism happen.

As a model in-progress for a critical altering practice, the persona Commons Architect.e has also acted as a research method to support me in the explicit formulation of the obtained knowledge. Her critical positioning and agency in practicing an altering uAD approach have supported me in finding and articulating the **three key results of this dissertation**. The Arch.e embodies (1) a criticism to the current state of affairs of uAD in relation to what is at play on and around Josaphat, (2) an altering uAD practice that explores the potential of the urban commons on the field, and (3) a positioning within the broader movement of participatory design and Brussels uAD.

## 1. A criticism

The first key result the Commons Architect.e embodies is a criticism towards the current state of affairs of uAD in Brussels, grounded in the experience on and around Josaphat. I situate the Arch.e in the broader movement of the (urban) commons. In this movement, Josaphat's commons architecture together with other cases like the exemplar R-Urban and Prinzessinnengärten find common ground in their aspiration to provide an alternative for how urban architectural design is approached today. Each in their way, these commons-oriented practices aim to respond to certain frictions that they feel are at stake at the local level. In relation to Josaphat, I have argued the main frictions

emerging around its planned development process are the sensed fear the development project will threaten the quality of life and a frustration with the lack of transparency and insufficient access to information.

Approaching Josaphat as a symptomatic ground for how uAD does (not) function in Brussels today, I have introduced Marçal (2016) and Raworth (2017) their caricature of Economic Man to embody the dominating neoliberal approach in our (Western European) society. With his interest for profit-driven urban development, Economic Man pushes the commodification and de-urbanization (Sassen, 2016) of the urban livelihood. In follow-up, I have created the persona of Modern Architect as the architectural alter ego of Economic Man. Born in Brussels' traumatizing Brusselization period (Dessou-roux and Puissant, 2008), Modern Architect embodies several matters of concern in contemporary uAD.

Modern Architect's obsession for positivist logic enforces a rational and so called objective approach to urban planning, while it also implies the omniscient technical authority of the expert and a functionalist, divided, approach. His hung for predictability make him obsess over control. While he distrust civic actors that can-not be clearly labeled, he has confidence in private developers to contribute to urban planning through their efficiency. Modern Architect –as the master- is rather independent and also his blueprint plans tend to remain rather generic and alienating from the existing everyday reality. He is dominant, which makes his planning is not living up the current democratic expectations. In addition, he tends to neglect the existing social tissue and the importance of nature in the urban environment. His self-interest encourages him to aim for spectacular projects that quickly can show off seemingly impressive results. Moreover, this self-interest makes him buddy up with Economic Man and his hunger to approach urban development as a financial investment.

Modern Architect is a caricature of the traumatizing Brusselization period that had its most fierce effect in the late sixties and seventies. However, the frictions at stake for Josaphat's planned development reveal that a lot of Modern Architect's attitude is still strikingly actual today. It might no longer be as outspoken and brutally inhumane, though it appears Modern Architect's discourse got anchored in Brussels' planning administrations and risks to jeopardize the quality of life and search for democratization in uAD; the Arch.e's (be)longing.

Moreover, the Commons Architect.e is also critical of Participation Architect. The latter represents the architectural counter agency that has emerged in the late sixties to fight Modern Architect in a strong oppositional streak. It is partly his merit that Modern Architect has lost a fair share of his power today. Participation Architect is embedded in a well-developed background of participatory design. However, as the PD scene keeps on unfolding, today Participation Architect seems to be in need of a contemporary update for which three opportunities have been discussed. There is a potential to be found in the digital innovation. The "architectural" is currently more and more broadened and should be approached more strongly beyond the built or the object. And the commons movement is increasingly developing in the field of PD and the urban world. Commons Architect.e claims it is time to look beyond participation now.

## 2. An altering uAD practice

The second key result the Commons Architect.e embodies is an altering uAD practice that explores the potential of the urban commons on the field. Starting off from the principles of the commons, the uAD practice has explored how a community of citizens can take stewardship over an urban (development) plot as an urban commons (Commons Josaphat, 2015b; Kip, Bienink, Dellenbaugh, Müller, & Schwegmann, 2015; Van Reusel, De Clerck, et al., 2015). The theoretical underpinning provided by the urban commons discourse provides the ground for the uAD practice. Of key importance are the ambition for a more democratic –commoning– governance (Borch & Kornberger, 2015), a positioning of the own action within a broader movement, which proposes an alternative to the neoliberal system (Bollier & Helfrich, 2015a), and the necessity for commoning practices to be generative rather than extractive (P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017).

The exploratory search for a commons-oriented uAD practice has been through four years of design-based participatory action research, which is summarized in a timeline (TL) that reconstructs around hundred of the actions and events that took place in this process. Through “making”, an everyday practice had been set up that evolved around micro-interventions that entail simple, banal, yet existential aspects of life like gardening and cooking. The house-garden-and-kitchen interventions have received an indispensable support of the rather invisible commoning that underlies the practice. All together, I have combined this into the concept of “commons” with the aim to both refer to the theoretical underpinning that is situated in the (urban) commons discourse and the seemingly evident, yet crucial importance of the everyday.

In order to contribute both to the practice of uAD and the theoretical development of the urban commons discussion, I have aimed to reveal, describe, illustrate, compose, articulate and visualize the uAD practice that has emerged from the exploratory search in the everyday making of urban commons.

There are different forms of output that I have provided in combination to this book (00, REC & MAP). There is the timeline (TL) on Instagram that visualizes and briefly discusses the main actions and events of the design-based participatory action research. There is a portfolio (P) that is published through the Josaph'Aire website that aims to provide an accessible and clear display of the house-garden-and-kitchen interventions on Josaphat. An exhibition (EXPO) is being organized to reveal the attitude of the Commons Architect.e through photography and illustrations. In addition, there is the real world impact on and around Josaphat as living lab at large (LL). To conclude, there are various schemes and mappings provided within this book (MAP) to support the fundamental reflection (00) and the more poetic reconstructions of lived experiences (REC) that are written down here. Through these different forms of output, combining a written account and visual resources, I aim to reach out to different publics and offer different readings to build an understanding / documentary / synthesis / reportage / display of our work as commoners and my reading and articulation of it as architect-researcher and architect-writer.

Subsequently, I have, within this written account, aimed to explicitly articulate the main learnings of this altering and commons-oriented uAD practice. I have both discussed the being (00.07) and the becoming (00.08) of the Commons Architect.e.

Her being is described through several patterns and adjectives. The first consist of

models that identify the what of the commons uAD practice, the ways how it manifests and situates the where and when of the agency of the Arch.e. In addition, the adjectives that have combined in certain clusters have provided the wording through which to describe and explicate the stance and attitude of the Arch.e. Both the patterns and the adjectives illustrate how the Arch.e's approach differs from that of Modern Architect. In this explicit articulation of the being of the Commons Architect.e, it is revealed she does not provide a perfect, all resolving model for how to deal with uAD today. As a critical persona, she questions and disempowers Modern Architect.

The becoming of the Arch.e is revealed through ten acts, of which for each act, one of its coping techniques is discussed more in detail. The acts mark phases in the evolution of the Commons Architect.e. Clustering several actions and events, the acts express how certain characteristic actions and patterns come together in response to a specific challenge that is encountered. In these acts, an overall focus is found that relates to certain adjectives and reveal relevant techniques. In the discussion of these acts, it becomes clear that the becoming of the Arch.e certainly has not gone through a smooth course. It emphasizes how the Arch.e is an anti-hero that seeks to cope with certain challenges and frictions as they emerge in her everyday practice. In addition, the techniques that are discussed, consist of concrete methods that the Arch.e has implemented to act upon specific challenges she has encountered along the way. Both the acts and techniques are discussed as they have happened throughout the four years of design-based participatory action research.

The discussion of the acts, moreover, reveals how the agency of the Arch. Has increasingly become political –related to the above discussed criticism- throughout this process. These acts do not provide a roadmap, rather they –in combination with the patterns and adjectives- aim to offer handles to fellow practitioners that are exploring their own attitude to develop an altering practice. In addition, the patterns, adjectives, acts and techniques aim to contribute to the more theoretical debate on the urban commons by providing insights in the everyday reality, challenges, pleasures and desperations of the practice.

### 3. A positioning

As third key result the Commons Architect.e embodies a positioning of the altering uAD practice within the broader movement of participatory design and the Brussels' uAD scene. The persona of Economic Man has supported a positioning of Josaphat's practice within the neoliberal system of our society, while Modern Architect helped to reveal the traumatizing history of Brusselization that still impacts today (Doucet, 2010, 2015b). Participation Architect, in addition, made the connection to the rich background of participatory design. Commons Architect.e has strong roots in this scene that shares the (be)longing to invest in quality of life and democratization through (urban architectural) design.

Retracing Participation Architect's journey throughout three waves of citizen involvement in urban planning (Mela, 2016, 2018), it becomes clear that today a third wave evolves that entails small scale, self-organized and constructive interventions in uAD. Commons Architect.e in this context aims to provide a contemporary mutation of Participation Architect, in which the commoning approach emphasizes the political goal to

push for more democratic governance models.

The altering uAD practice on Josaphat relates to the exemplar urban commons practices of Parckfarm, R-Urban and the Prinzessinnengärten to take part in a broader –third wave- movement. This matches with what in the theoretical reflections around the commons is also recognized as part of a broader political movement (P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017; Bollier, 2015; European Commons Assembly, 2017a). This commons-oriented third wave of citizen involvement in urban architectural design is driven by the objective to loosen the stranglehold of Economic Man's profit-driven stance to our urban livelihoods.

Moreover, Participation Architect's journey has developed through two established turning points that each mark a critical change in Brussels' planning tools and instruments. These two turning points have respectively aligned with the first and second wave of civic involvement in urbanism in Brussels. The current third wave thus provides ground to aspire a hypothetical third milestone change today.

In this context, the guidelines that have been discussed in this chapter that could support the ongoing becoming of the Commons Architect.e, also find their relevance. The well thought and executed implementation of one of these guidelines –preferably several of them though- could mark a similar critical change in Brussels' urbanism. This would break the current tendency in the innovation of Brussels' urban planning scene to be more in favor of the ongoing privatization of the city, a process that threatens to further push commodification and de-urbanization.

The guideline to strengthen “transparency in planning processes” could tackle to lacking access to information, while “poking in the existing governance” aims to push democratization. The fear of losing quality of life could be tackled through “thinking beyond the price in public tenders”, “contract-based instruments for public-civic participation”, “in-house pushing for civic participation” and “focusing on the human scale / grain”. Some concrete tools could support the innovation that is emerging within the third wave of civic involvement in urbanism; “permis de faire” and “micro financing”.

However, a lot will be defined in how these tools, methods and/or strategies will be implemented. Without “a strong vision and strategy through co-creation” and a strong awareness on “the necessity of transitional use for urban innovation” a lot of its potential can get lost.

In anticipation of such critical institutional changes, the Commons Architect.e keeps on developing her becoming to take part in the broader altering –commoning- movement in urban architectural design.

# 00.09

future frameworks  
(BE)LONGING

(...)

*Nous nous manifestons*

*Nous sommes propositions en marche*

*Nous sommes confrontation et dialogue*

*Nous sommes expériences*

*Création de mille possibles*

*Espérances*

*Constructions de mondes communs*

*Nous sommes l'exubérance et la joie*

*Ensemble*

*Nous sommes l'air d'un printemps*

- (Zinneke, 2016)



Feet on Josaphat's ground, I have aimed to absorb and articulate what I find in it promising air. To grasp the potential that I feel is simmering in our/my agency on and around Josaphat, I have set a stage that reveals Josaphat's identities as a living lab at large; an incubator, a commons lab, an extended civic research and a site of action. It is at this setting, which is both symbolic and symptomatic for Brussels' urban architectural design (uAD) that I wrote my play script. A common play that narrates my lived experiences, as architect-researcher, and writing, as architect-writer, of our house-garden-and-kitchen practices, as we -the commoners.

I have one by one introduced my actors. The already established persona of "Economic Man". With his obsession for positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance and self-interest, this character has opened the stage for the antagonist found in the caricature of "Modern Architect". He embodies the evils of the commodification and privatization of the urban environment and the de-urbanization process it results in. Standing firm in the urban architectural design landscape, Modern Architect reveals some of the matters of concern that lead to frictions at Josaphat's ground. As Modern Architect's development plans are criticized to be threatening the quality of life and judged undemocratic as they lack transparency and real participation, Josaphat becomes a tense field.

Enters "Participation Architect". He is our hero from the good old times. He is born and raised to oppose Modern Architect and has a fierce drive for what I have named "(be)longing". His life goals are to improve the quality of life of our urban environment and to support democratization in uAD. He seems to have become outdated. He no longer fully lives up to the expectations as the field of (participatory) uAD has evolved since his high days in the late sixties. He might have a look at the potential of the digital world, have a more open understanding of the "architectural", and dive into the commons movement; yet it is time to recognize that some things have to change. We are beyond participation now.

Looking for a contemporary model to embody an altering uAD practice, the silhouette of "Commoning Architect" appears. With Josaphat's scenery in the background, I have welcomed "Commons Architect.e" -Arch.e. She is an atypical protagonist, born in Josaphat's house-garden-and-kitchen stories and as such her character is formed according to the mirrored reflection of my/our architectural agency there. Her existential body, "architect.e" is feminine -altering- but as easily could become plural. Her core is informal and in-between while her commons nature relates to the existential importance of the everyday and the relational values found in commoning. Relatively new to the stage, her caricature still needs to mature. Her strength is improvisational theater. Her ability to nuance makes her character ambiguous.

The identity of the Arch.e is composed by an open container of clustering adjectives; caring, attentive, relational, outgoing, convinced, influential, political, strategic, (un) present, stagnating, speculative, interpretative, imaginative, scripting, visualizing, composing, creative, enthusiastic, active, facilitating, coordinating, promoting, active, improvising, imperfect, not blaming, networking, welcoming, inviting, communicative, presenting, et cetera. As the Arch.e comes to claim her spot at the stage, the contours of her silhouette remain shady. She blends in with other agents such as the students of the "Spatial Mirror" elective course from which she eagerly absorbs some attributes; empathic, dramatic, slow, poetic, et cetera.

These characteristics manifest themselves in the what, how, and where and when of

the commons uAD practice. The commons architecture reveals itself in the sketchy and open imaginations of the Arch.e, in the performative stance of the micro-interventions, in the essential lewendige that is consciously focused on and in the aesthetics of the self-proclaimed transitional use. The Arch.e implements design strategies such as architecting and wandering, as her design is also made up by establishing commoning governance or through finding funding. She positions herself and her practice in multiple atmospheres that through their inextricable stratification make up her sites of action. The location of her practice is physical but also consists of atmospheres such as the living lab at large, social networks and relations, skills and knowledges, the interstitial space, a political scene, and the digital world. In the when of the transitional, the Arch.e finds space to explore a tactical urban planning approach.

Moreover, I have unraveled the process of the Arch.e her ongoing becoming. I have marked ten acts that characterize a cluster of actions and events. Subsequently then, for each phase, I have highlighted some of the Arch.e's coping techniques that define concrete and situated methods. To foster the Commons Architect.e her ongoing unfolding, I have provided ten guidelines that can be implemented to provide space for her continuous becoming.

As the Arch.e performs her role in interplay with Modern Architect, her figure comes to lose some of its haziness, and with that also her doubts and flaws start to sharpen. She embraces the emotional and relational as valuable logic for her architectural practice. She is dependent on the funding she finds, the peers she works with, the public stakeholders she aims to reach out at. She needs to be tactical to be strategic and as such finds herself working at a micro level while aspiring change at the city level. One step forward might mean two steps back, and accordingly, her practice takes on a slow pace. She cares, and her agency cannot be disconnected from emotional bonds. What might be exactly that what makes her attitude to be altering and in favor of (be)longing, might as easily backfire and make her practice erode.

At the Josaphat stage, she –with conviction- claims her space side by side to Modern Architect. Though she still feels some unease. When it comes to iconic realizations, impressive projects, strong language, and efficient results, the Arch.e stands in the shade. Cautious, she keeps on searching her place. Mindful though, not to forget the fun to be found in the game.

The model represented by Commons Architect.e should not be approached as an idealized hero, the *deus ex machina* the drama might need. She embodies a lively proposal to practice an altering approach in uAD. She plays her part at Josaphat and encompassing its simmering air, she dreams of being one of the protagonists to push for a (hypothetical) third turning point in the making of Brussels.

She might also outcast her relevance beyond. She might inspire those fellow architects –and non-architects- that are also searching for how to deal with uAD today differentially. Not necessarily as a model to look up to –the actress to adore- but more as an influencer, showing it is possible to find –or rather be searching for- your own space. She might encourage those looking for an altering approach to create their persona. Perhaps the Arch.e is in the first instance a model that shows there is no need to try and squeeze yourself into the outfit of Modern Architect. You could as easily try and change the play.

## a. Towards a more commons architectural practice

As architect-researcher, architect-writer and one of the commoners, I, through the different forms of output of this doctoral research and design practice, aim to capture what I feel to be simmering in Josaphat's air. In this research, I have focused on exploring how the lived experiences at Josaphat can inform an altering practice and attitude within uAD. To provide some answers to this research question, I have contextualized the agency of the commons practice at Josaphat concerning the field of urban architectural design. Furthermore, I have discussed the insights considering the specific uAD practice emerging at Josaphat's ground, which I have obtained through a design-based participatory action research method.

Through this work, I aim to contribute to the broader conversation considering the relation between the urban commons and the field of uAD. Through this dissemination of the situated knowledges derived at Josaphat's ground, I hope to incite enthusiasm about what a more commons architectural practice could bring.

## b. Building on Josaphat's ground

With this doctoral research and design practice, I aim to contribute to the field of urban architectural design through three key results.

As the first key result, the Commons Architect.e embodies a criticism towards the current state of affairs of uAD in Brussels, grounded in the experience on and around Josaphat. I situate the Arch.e in the broader movement of the (urban) commons. In this movement, Josaphat's commons architecture together with other cases like the exemplar R-Urban and Prinzessinnengärten find common ground in their aspiration to provide an alternative for how urban architectural design is approached today.

As the important second result, the Commons Architect.e embodies an altering uAD practice that explores the potential of the urban commons on the field. Starting off from the principles of the commons, the uAD practice has studied how a community of citizens can take stewardship over an urban (development) plot as an urban commons (Commons Josaphat, 2015b; Kip, Bienink, Dellenbaugh, Müller, & Schwegmann, 2015; Van Reusel, De Clerck, et al., 2015). The theoretical underpinning provided by the urban commons discourse offers the ground for the uAD practice. Of crucial importance are the ambition for a more democratic –commoning– governance (Borch & Kornberger, 2015), a positioning of the own action within a broader movement, which proposes an alternative to the neoliberal system (Bollier & Helfrich, 2015a), and the necessity for commoning practices to be generative rather than extractive (P2P Foundation & Transnational Institute, 2017).

As the third result, the Commons Architect.e embodies a positioning of the altering uAD practice within the broader movement of participatory design in the Brussels' uAD scene. The persona of Economic Man has supported a positioning of Josaphat's practice within the neoliberal system of our society, while Modern Architect helped to reveal the traumatizing history of Brusselization that still impacts today (Doucet, 2010, 2015b). Participation Architect made the connection to the rich background of the participatory design scene. Commons Architect.e has strong roots in this scene that shares the (be)longing to invest in the quality of life and democratization through (urban

architectural) design.

c. Until here and now

In the here and now of this written account, in which I aimed to capture and disseminate the learnings from this doctoral research and design practice, I would like to demonstrate its limits and strengths.

While exploring how the lived experiences at Josaphat can inform an altering practice and attitude within uAD, I have introduced the concept of a “commons uAD practice”. To disseminate the insights I have obtained through the design-based participatory action research, I have introduced the personas of Economic Man, Modern Architect, Participation Architect, and Commons Architect.e. The latter has supported me to embody an altering model for uAD.

I would like to first and foremost stress that the Arch.e is not a *deus ex machina* that knows the most effective way to deal with the frictions that are at stake in uAD. She is a silhouette that has assisted me to identify our/my architectural agency at Josaphat. She has her shortcomings; her persona is not to be approached as a guidebook. Through her persona, I aim to build an awareness of altering approached that might be possible to shift the current state of affairs in uAD. Her identity and patterns might inspire others to explore along. I hope she can embody some of the energy I feel to be simmering in Josaphat’s air.

Second, this doctoral research and design practice –and as such also this written account– are founded on Josaphat’s ground. Although, I discuss this living lab at large extends the strictly academic and architectural and also bypasses Josaphat’s delineated perimeter. Both my experiences and the findings discussed here should be positioned within its specific context. I have claimed Josaphat’s situation is symbolic and symptomatic for Brussels’ uAD in general, though I would like to demonstrate her sites of actions make up their particular stratification and should not be approached as representative for the whole Brussels’ context. Accordingly, the caricatures that I have introduced are but generalizations of the frictions, matters of concern, possibilities, and opportunities that I have analyzed to be present around Josaphat.

As a third note, I want to demonstrate that the output of this doctoral research and design practice is based on the situated knowledges I have built in the design-based participatory action research. Both encompassing lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing, these knowledges are local and partial. The narrative that builds this written account is derived from an insider perspective. As architect-researcher, I have implemented methods to analyze the shared work we –the commoners– have put in place. Accordingly, I –as architect-writer– have articulated my reflection. It has been my performative claim to identify the here discussed house-garden-and-kitchen initiatives as urban commons, to define our temporary use as a self-proclaimed transitional one and to recuperate our everyday activities as political statements considering uAD in Brussels. Not all of my peers would agree with the account I have provided here. Moreover, I am an urban activist, which colors not only my architectural agency but also my narration. The Arch.e also plays out her role in the doctoral research. I do not claim this doctoral research and design practice to be “objective” as is understood in the positivist sense.

As a fourth element, I want to emphasize my “architectural upbringing” as the pro-

fessional context of this work. My background is formed through my education at the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture within the trajectory of uAD. My approach to the “architectural” extends beyond its strict perception of focusing on what is built. And as part of a community of commoners, I engage in transdisciplinary collaborations. Architecture, and certainly the commons uAD practice, cannot be understood in disconnection from the political and social sciences –or other related fields. As such, I may have made claims that would rather belong to these disciplines. In this, it is not my intention to claim expertise in these fields, and I acknowledge they have their own valuable body of research methods. My background skills and knowledge are anchored in the architectural profession. The analysis and findings that emerge out of this doctoral research and design practice as such need to be understood within this context.

Fifth, I would like to clarify that our civic activism at Josaphat aims to push for a more commons-oriented approach in dealing with our urban environment. I want to emphasize that the civic collectives that are described here do not claim to be representative for all the Brussels’ citizens. We mainly consist of groups of engaged and diverse citizens that are driven by a (be)longing to invest in a better quality of life through our urban environment and struggle for democratization in uAD. I do believe Josaphat’s situation and the frictions that emerge around it, provide arguments to support our cause.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge a lot of the insights discussed in this written account would benefit further exploration. Several of the design strategies of the Commons Architect.e need to be further implemented and researched in different contexts. At the same time, it opens up the question of how the Arch.e can move beyond the framework of this doctoral research and design practice. Would a commons uAD practice stand a chance when the Arch.e is left over to the merciless capitalist market mechanisms she aims to move away from? Might cooperating with private promoters offer an opportunity to alter their in-separable alliance with Modern Architect? Would the Arch.e’s atelier function in the arrangement of an architecture office, a cooperative, as part of a public administration, a research network, a nonprofit? How would another ground impact to her still becoming persona?

There is still much more hanging in Josaphat’s air.

#### d. Looking beyond

The three aimed for key results in this design-based participatory action research play out both in the field of research and practice. Accordingly, I see the future frameworks of the doctoral research and design practice develop in both an academic and professional direction. Although I would like to emphasize that practice and research are entangled, I will discuss them here as separate focus areas for the further continuation of the doctoral research and design practice.

As addressed in the “skills and knowledges” atmosphere that partly makes up the sites of actions of the commons uAD practice, the development and sharing of local and partial –situated- knowledges are an essential part of the combined practice and research. Approaching Josaphat as a living lab at large, I claim its ground entangles civic and academic research. Moreover, the locally built knowledges travel beyond the strict perimeter of Josaphat and have also involved architecture students within the Spatial Mirror elective course.

I aspire to continue the development and sharing of the knowledges obtained on and around Josaphat. First and foremost, I believe it would be valuable to advance the shared exploration and dissemination of an altering architectural attitude similarly as it has taken place in the design studio of the Spatial Mirror. It allows for (architecture) students to go to the field, reach out to citizens and commoners, build trust and allow for dependence on colleague architects, etc.

In my reading, the Spatial Mirror experience has been about sharing how to learn from Josaphat, to look for one's own positioning in the field, to learn from each other and explore what you/we value (in architecture). Who are you as an architect? What do you imagine for Josaphat? Are you (be)longing?

In this context, the architectural education is approached as a mutual learning school and a shared design-based participatory action research that leaves the distanced stance and creative independence of the studio. I aspire the Spatial Mirror teaching experience to advance further and establish an open platform for those learners who are willing to expose themselves and unlearn some of Modern Architect's streaks, to open up to their very own architectural being.

In the same conviction with which I advocate that Brussels' uAD scene would benefit to welcome Com-mons Architect.e to lose some of Modern Architect's dominance, I am convinced our Faculty of Architecture could benefit from welcoming a cozy design studio that allows students to explore their altering –feminized– approach to uAD. For this, Brussels provides an intriguing field that nudges to get out the architectural comfort zone. Teaching has been a shared exploratory journey that I would like to continue.

Moreover, there is also a great potential in sharing the situated knowledges that are obtained at Josaphat's at the European level. More specifically, as part of a "we" of commoners I have taken part in the collective envisioning of a European School of Commoning; "ESC" or also "escape".

The lively dream to establish the ESC, originates from a freewheeling brainstorm during the European Commons Assembly at Madrid (October 2017). With fellow defenders of "the right to the city" –such as Marco Clausen from the Prinzessinnengärten–, I have found an alliance in our shared aspiration to establish an altering school. This commons school would allow us to further exchange among us, as those urban activists that are in an everyday struggle to create and defend urban commons. In ESC, we imagine our own pedagogical framework in which theory and practice are entangled and where we can share our mistakes openly. We unanimously have agreed that a "Department of Failures" should be the first to pilot ESC. In the ESC no degree is required to enter.

In itself, this is not a revolutionary ambition, and already several commoners in Europe are working on their creation of such a learning approach at local level. In ESC, I see the potential to transfer our situated knowledges transnationally. It would offer a platform in which we could accumulate lived experiences and designerly ways of knowing with other forms of knowledge and coming from different contexts. Furthermore, ESC would be an open agora in which we could disseminate the learnings on urban commoning as we explore them. It could be an open workshop in which I could further engage in the debate and practice of a more commons architecture. It would allow exchange among "us" as commoners, both positioned in the commons' intellectual debate as standing with our feet on the field and sharing knowledges at the everyday level.

Currently, the European School of Commoning is only a fuzzy imagination –wandering–



that manifests itself as we keep our aspiration for it alive. It's quite an ambition, but as commoners, we are accustomed to taking things step by step. Let's see how ESC could find ground in Brussels. After all, due to the work of Commons Josaphat, Josaphat can claim a position as commons lab. We see the connections. We feel the potential.

And then there is Josaphat and the on-going practice of commons uAD. The doctoral research and design practice are entangled to its planned development, its self-proclaimed transitional use, Commons Josaphat's proposal for a model building block and the slumbering dream to realize an iconic, large scale architectural manifestation.

This opens the question if the doctoral research and design practice could continue through the creation of a commons-oriented building block, whether or not at Josaphat. After all, the Commons Architect.e acknowledges she can learn from Modern Architect and feels the nagging desire to prove her agency at this extent. The imagined building block would be an architectural –in its object-oriented sense– manifestation of her commons uAD practice. Furthermore, it would be the pilot of a neighborhood “en bien commun” as proposed by Commons Josaphat. It would manifest a continuation of the speculative nature of research by design. It would maintain the critical approach that is one of the key objectives of this doctoral research and design practice. Continuing the imagination and aspired realization of a commons-oriented building block would continue the doctoral work in its focus to question society and its way of dealing with urban architectural design.

The –wandering– imagination of the commons-oriented building block could lean on the work Commons Josaphat has invested in the co-creation of its “îlot modèle” (model building block). It entangles with the COlab brainstorm in which Dag Boutsen and I envision an iconic architectural realization to manifest the third generation of participatory architecture, which would highlight the potential we read in the proliferation of civic city making initiatives –third wave practices. There is the “CIMBY” research proposal Commons Josaphat had developed together with many befriended associations such as BRAL and Cogeneris and which the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture had supported. “Commons in My BackYard” aspired a living lab-based research that would explore how Josaphat's transitional use and the “îlot modèle” could merge into a real project. It proposes action research to explore the creation of an urban commons building block. And it entailed reaching out to the MSI with aspirations to set up a public-civic partnership. The aspired for building block might find its manifestation in living lab-based action research as proposed by CIMBY. It would emphasize Josaphat's identity as a living lab at large and strengthen its position as a commons lab. It might also be relevant to research how the persona of the Commons Architect.e could continue her practice outside of the academic research framework, and try to become a partner in the ongoing development process for Josaphat. After all, the MSI has repeatedly evoked their consideration to implement CJ's îlot modèle proposal in Josaphat's second development phase. Similarly, they soothe us –and the public– with the promise that Josaph'Aire's activities could transition into the public spaces that are designed for the future Josaphat district.

Some opportunities for a public-civic partnership are opening up. In this –imagine the MSI would grant us the space to develop the îlot modèle in Josaphat's second development phase– the common building block would diminish or even break up the vast parcel of the second phase (being a third of Josaphat's 25 hectares of to-be-developed land). This, whether how small the change, might counter the fierce de-urbanization that is feared to come with such large scale development.

And although we can only speculate about the results such a public-civic partnership might lead to, it may well establish a performative shift in Brussels uAD to put in place other planning procedures. What we might need to push for is a third turning point in favor of citizen involvement in Brussels' urbanism. Exemplary tools that support public-civic partnerships can be found in Turin –and many other cities- where the government implements the “local regulation on collaboration between citizens and the municipality to care, regenerate and reuse urban commons”. Ciaffi and Saporito (2017) describe how this tool results in a simple but revolutionary innovation for public administrations in search for collaboration rather than conflict with citizens. The regulation supports citizens –and with them, the Commons Architect.e- to autonomously carry out urban interventions for the general interest. Josaphat's planned development also opens up opportunities for a partnership with private actors. The on-going competitive dialogue, in search of a private promotor to develop Josaphat's first phase, is under-way. And as the six selected consortia are currently (June 2018) setting up a design team, most of them have reached out to us, as they try to integrate the, by the MSI pushed for, participatory component for their candidacy. How such a commons-oriented partnership with private promoters might unfold, would form another exciting line of research to explore.

And then there is also the opportunity to look beyond Josaphat. Still thriving of the ground it has provided us, we could extend its air to other sites and pending developments in Brussels. Maybe our manifestation of a commons-oriented building block can also be developed through the conversion of an already empty office tower. This might be more suitable than becoming an accomplice in the sacrifice of one of our last land reserves, which hosts valuable biodiversity. Which form the imagined building block will take remains undecided. The creation of a merged COLab, îlot modèle and CIMBY building block could establish both through a public-civic or private-civic partnership. This would entail combined research and practice to explore how the commons uAD practice could mature into a commoning architecture.

This imagined building block would embody some of the intriguing aspects of Josaphat's simmering air. In it, I read to potential to pilot commons-oriented public-civic partnership in urban development –the next level Community Land Trust as to speak. It could become a strong architectural representation of the contemporary wave of citizen involvement in urbanism. It might help to build towards a third turning point for Brussels' urbanism, beyond participation.

In my wildest imaginations, the commons-oriented building block could host a Brussels “campus” of the European School of Commoning. Its co-creation process could become an exploratory design studio. As a living lab at large, it could welcome architecture students to explore their position in the field as they support citizens to realize their aspired manifestation for an altering approach to city making. The combined COLab, CIMBY and îlot modèle would be a promising future framework to continue the doctoral research and design practice and to further build on the richness of Josaphat's fertile ground. However, in first insight –in my understanding- it would be one of the most beautiful ways to continue the journey we have taken on as commoners; a way to increase the energy I feel hanging in Josaphat's air.

It certainly will be a challenge, yet this aspired building block bears the potential to pursue the (be)longing.

What do you imagine the future city looks like?



15.07.2018

# 00.10

publications

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## 0.10.01 How one tree can change the future of a neighborhood

De Smet, A., & Van Reusel, H. (2018). How one tree can change the future of a neighbourhood: The process behind the creation of the Boerenhof Park as an example for tactical urban planning. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*(30), 286-294. doi:10.1016/j.ufug.2017.09.001

## 00.10.02 Online dessertentbuffet

Van Meerbeek, P., & Van Reusel, H. (2018). Online dessertentbuffet. In P. Van Meerbeek, W. Van Roy, R. Pauly, G. D. Bauwens, An, & L. Chemin (Eds.), *Burgers in de Brusselsse keuken. Recepten voor democratisch zelfbeheer*. (pp. 76-83). Brussels: BRAL.

## 00.10.03 Wandering as a design strategy for infrastructuring

Van Reusel, H. (2016). Wandering as a design strategy for infrastructuring. *Strategic Design Research Journal*, 9(2), 112-127.

## 00.10.04 Commonplace architecture: Vlogging

Van Reusel, H. (2017, 8-11 September). Commonplace architecture: Vlogging as a way of reflection on the performative design practice. Paper presented at the CA<sup>2</sup>RE - Conference for Artistic and Architectural (Doctoral) Research, Ljubljana.

## 00.10.05 Wellicht heeft participatie er toe bijgedragen

Van Reusel, H., & Boutsen, D. (forthcoming). Wellicht heeft participatie er toe bijgedragen, wellicht zal participatie er toe bijdragen... In A. Kuhk, H. Heynen, F. Moulaert, L. Huybrechts, & J. Schreurs (Eds.), *Participatiegolven: Reflecties op sociaal-ruimtelijke kwesties*: Leuven University Press.

## 00.10.06 (How) can you plan an urban commons?

Van Reusel, H., De Clerck, P., Pak, B., & Verbeke, J. (2015, 6-7 November). (How) can you plan an urban commons? Placemaking, visioning and negotiating for a commons on the Josaphat site in Brussels. Paper presented at the The City As A Commons: Re-conceiving Urban Space, Common Goods And City Governance, Bologna.

## 00.10.07 Maison des possibles, poster presentation

Van Reusel, H. & De Brant, T. (2017, 11 July). Maison des possibles. Poster presentation at IASC Practicing the commons conference, Utrecht, the Netherlands.

## 00.10.08 Finding direction in urbanism through an entangled process of architecting

Van Reusel, H., Descheemaeker, A., Verbeke, J., & De Brant, T. (2017). Finding Direction in Urbanism through an Entangled process of Architecting. Taking from where they come to affect where to go in the urban living lab at the Jospahat site in Brussels. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Incubators of Public Spaces conference: Urban Living Labs for Public Space, a New Generation of Planning?, KU Leuven, Faculty of Architecture, Campus Sint-Lucas Brussels.

## 00.10.09 Collective city-making in Brussels

Van Reusel, H., Pak, B., van Meerbeek, P., & Verbeke, J. (2015). Collective city-making in Brussels. Paper presented at the A publication by ADAPT-r for the Creative Practice Conference 'Making Research| Researching Making'(10-12 September 2015).

## 00.10.10 Incubators of Public Spaces: A digital agora

Van Reusel, H., Verbeke, J., Mauro, B., Caneparo, L., & Rolfo, D. (2015). Incubators of Public Spaces: A Digital Agora to Support and Empower Self-organised Participatory Processes in Urban (Re)development. Paper presented at the Short paper for the Unfolding Participation Workshop at the 5th Decennial Aarhus Conference, Critical Alternatives, Aarhus, Denmark.





# 00.11

## REFERENCES

## 00.11.01 Glossary

### Act

An “act” defines a moment or phase –stretching over several months- in the development of the urban architectural design practice on and around Josaphat. In section 00.08.01 ten act’s in the becoming of the Commons Architect.e are discussed. Like in a theater play, these acts -as clusters of actions and events- come together as they mark a milestone period in the four years of this doctoral research and design practice.

### Altering

The notion of the “altering” refers to the by Doina Petrescu (2007) edited book on “Altering practices” (2007). Here “otherness” –and its relation to gender- is approached as a verb to demonstrate the active and dynamic practice in a transformative process that entails both thinking and making. Perceiving difference as a positive attribute, the becoming of the alterities are located within a specific situation and context. “Altering” is introduced in the introductory chapter 00.02.01 “Welcome to the altering scene”.

### Architecting

The notion of “architecting” is based on Bengtsson et al (2016). their statement that architecture is to be understood as a process in which the architect engages fiercely and develops a strong relation to the people, material, things, landscapes, etc. he/she works with. Building on to this understanding I have discussed with my co-authors (Van Reusel, Descheemaeker et al., 2017) in “Finding direction in urbanism through an entangled process of architecting” (see section 00.10.08) that architecting entails a highly entangled and processual approach that allows to create a process of collective “envisioning” (Manzini, 2014). The concept of architecting is in this written account of the doctorate discussed under section 00.07.02.a “Architecting”.

### (be)longing

I have conceptualized the driving ambition of the Commons Architect.e and her colleague Participation Architect as “(be)longing”. It consists of a passionate search to improve the quality of life and to support democratization through urban architectural design. The notion of (be)longing is introduced in section 00.06.02 “Something is in motion”, in addition the (be)longing of the doctoral research and design practice reveals potential future frameworks that are described in chapter 00.09 “(be)longing”.

### Brusselization

Also “Brusseliseren” and “Bruxellisation” is an in the Brussels urban architectural design scene established concepts that stands for the profit-driven destruction of the city as it fiercely occurred through the late sixties and seventies. Originally defined by Dessouroux and Puissant (2008), Brusselization entails a strong sense of powerlessness in relation to urban politics that show to be more at the service of real-estate development. The concept of Brusselization and its broader context are discussed in 00.05.01.c “A familiar struggle in Brussels”.

### CIMBY (Commons In My BackYard)

“CIMBY” is the title of a research project that we –among others Commons Josaphat and the Faculty of Architecture of the KU Leuven- have proposed to bring the combined civic and academic research around Josaphat to the next level. The proposal concerns an action research that would bring together several commons-oriented initiatives to explore the possibility to have a building block of Josaphat’s future development to be created. In this the ongoing temporary use at Josaphat would be seen as a stepping stone in the transitional process towards a commons neighborhood. The making of the proposal and a brief summary of the project are described in REC.2017.01.09 “Proposing Commons in My BackYard // CIMBY”.

### COLab

“COLab” is an imagination of an iconic architectural manifestation of what in this dissertation is discussed as the third wave of citizen involvement in urban planning. The concept resulted from a brainstorm between me and Dag Boutsen (Van Reusel & Boutsen, forthcoming) in which we propose to take the next step from the proliferating yet often small scale community initiatives that we see are contributing to city making. A system-oriented cooperative living lab is imagined that provides space to collective governance, civic engagement, co-creation, culture, co-education, et cetera. The COLab brainstorm is reconstructed in REC.2016.09.19 “COLab brainstorm” and its potential is discussed in section 00.09 “(be)longing”.

### Commoning

The “commoning” practice is one of the key elements in the creation and care for (urban) commons. It emphasizes the active dynamic that is required by a community of commoners to –in a generative sense- take care of their common resources. Commoning entails the institutions and rules that are involved in their bio-political (re)production (Bollier, 2014; Bollier and Helfrich, 2012, 2015b; Borch and Kornberger, 2015; Commons Josaphat, 2015b; De Angelis and Stravides, 2010; Dellenbaugh, Kip, Bieniok, Müller and Schwegmann, 2015; European Commons Assembly, 2016; Ostrom, 1990; P2P Foundation and Tranational Institute, 2017; Pak and Scheerlinck, 2015; Petrescu, 2010 & Shareable, 2017). The notions of commoning is contextualized in its urban commons context in this book in section 00.04.01 “Reconstructed experiences of urban commoning”.

### Commoning governance

Relating to the concept of “commoning”, I in this dissertation define a “commoning governance” through a twofold meaning. Building on to our (Van Reusel, De Clerck et al., 2015) discussion in “(How) can you plan an urban commons?” which reflect on the agency of commons Josaphat, a commoning governance here is approached as a process of caring and democratization. The caring aspect focuses on the everyday running of the Commons urban architectural design practice and the reproductive work it requires. The democratization demonstrates the political orientation of stewardship that seeks to shift towards more legitimacy in the balancing endeavor on the tightrope walk between legitimacy and efficiency. The notion of commoning governance is discussed in section 00.07.02.c “Commoning governance”.

### Commons Architect.e (Arch.e)

The persona of the “Commons Architect.e” embodies a generalized model for an altering urban architectural design practice as it has evolved within this doctoral research and design practice. The Arch.e thrives of a fierce drive for quality of life and democratization, that I have named (be)longing. She is an unheroic protagonist who creates house-garden-and-kitchen interventions in relation to a commoning practice. Her existential body –architect.e- is feminine –altering- but as easily could be masculine or plural. Her core is informal and looks to move away from the architectural as the built. Her character is ambiguous as she can be described by an open cluster of adjectives such as relational, caring, influential, strategic, creative, intuitive, not present at times, communicative, facilitating, et cetera. This persona is discussed in chapters 00.07 “Commons Architect.e” and 00.08 “The becoming of the Arch.e”.

### Commons Josaphat (CJ)

“Commons Josaphat” is a civic and political autonomous platform. This Brussels collective arose around the ambition to emphasize and foster the commons potential for the creation of the city with a focus on the Josaphat site in Brussels. The civic collective has launched an open call for ideas to propose how Josaphat’s future could develop as an urban commons. Through participatory workshops this open brainstorm resulted in the collectively written proposal “Josaphat en commun” (Commons Josaphat, 2015b). Discussing on topics such as shared governance, ecological-urban structures, innovative housing and an alternative financial model in urban development, the document focusses on how the (re)production of the city could happen in a commons-oriented manner. The work and agency of Commons Josaphat is described in section 00.03.02 “A living lab at large”.

### Coping techniques

Coping techniques consist of concrete methods in which the “Commons Architect.e” acts on specific challenges. The techniques have been important in the becoming process of the Arch.e, in which they differ from the “patterns” that reveal overall aspects of how her practice is manifested, through what it finds identity, and when and where it is situated. Coping techniques, more specifically, are connected to a specific “act” in the becoming of the Arch.e and, as such illustrate through which specific methods she copes with certain challenging situations as she encounters them along her journey. They are characterized by their intuitive and reactive nature, implemented within a specific situation.

### Design-based participatory action research

The main method that has been conducted for this doctoral research and design practice is “design-based participatory action research”. This method combines research by design with the in social sciences established method of participatory action research. In section 00.03.03 of this book, the method –as it has conducted within this doctorate- is discussed.

### Designerly ways of knowing

According to Cross (2001) “designerly ways of knowing” recognize a particular way to relate design and science. Positioned in a context of research by design, designerly ways of knowing in this dissertation looks to bring together the analytic approach of science with the constructive and speculative nature of design that is not to be repeatable. In addition it relates to the necessity for research (by design) to bring meaning to the broader community (Newton, 2011).

### De-urbanization

Saskia Sassen claims that the growing hunger for profit-driven urban development leads to large scale urban development which erodes the organically grown fabric and its related social networks. The result is a process that despite its densification, leads to what Sassen calls “de-urbanization”. This simplified urban (re)generation kills the urban tissue of the city, makes affordable housing more scarce and alienate people from their everyday urban environment. The concept is discussed in the context of the neoliberal mechanisms embodied by Economic Man in section 00.05.02.a “Our society is built on Economic Man”.

### Economic Man

The persona of “Economic Man” is based on his agency within the work of Katrine Marçal (2016) in her book “Who cooked Adam Smith’s dinner” and Kate Raworth’s (2017) “Doughnut economics”. Based on these authors critical reflection on this person-alization of the global neoliberalist model, I have caricaturized Economic Man according to five main attributes; positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance and self-interest. I claim that the attitude that he represents in urban architectural design supports the commodification and de-urbanization (Sassen, 2015, 2016). The persona of Economic Man is introduced in section 00.05.02.a “Our society is built on Economic Man”.

### House-garden-and-kitchen

The notion of “house-garden-and-kitchen” aims to reveal the powerful strength and at the same time simple banality of the everyday. The concept is a translation of the Dutch “huis-tuin-en-keuken”, an expression and adjective that is used to describe the common yet existential nature of something. It entail the notion of “household, common-or-garden” (Van Dale, 2018). In this the concept also playfully relates to three of the urban architectural design interventions that have developed on and around Josaphat in its self-proclaimed transitional use. In chapter 00.04 “House-garden-and-kitchen stories” I discuss the “Maison des Possibles” (house), “Jardin Latinis” (garden) and “Recup’Kitchen” (kitchen) project. This house, garden and kitchen tripartite is complimented by an underlying and rather invisible commoning represented through the JosaphAire nonprofit. Aiming to include this layer of commoning, everyday caring and support in (re)production, I also use the adjective of “commons”, as for example in “Commons Architect.e”.



### Ilôt modèle

The work of the “Commons Josaphat” collective has –among others- led to the creation of the “ilôt modèle” proposal. Based on the by “Commons Josaphat” supported collective writing of the “Josaphat en commun” publication, a thematic working group has developed a proposal for a commons-oriented building block within the planned development for Josaphat. Bringing together an intergenerational co-housing project, a cooperative supermarket, the Brussels Community Land Trust, a school working with an alternative pedagogical model and more, an architectural and financial plan was developed in an innovative co-creative manner. This trajectory of Commons Josaphat is discussed in section 00.03.02.c “An extended civic research”.

### Imagination

“Imaginations” –or in Dutch “verbeelding”- is a projection or visualization of what could be. It is situated at the crossing of the image and the imagining. In section 00.07.01.a “Its imaginations” I discuss this design strategy as one of the patterns that identifies the “Commons Architect.e” her commons-oriented urban architectural design practice.

### Incubators of Public Spaces (Incubators)

The research consortium of the JPI Urban Europe “Incubators of Public Spaces” research –in which I took part- has described the project as following: “Incubators of Public Spaces is a JPI Urban Europe research project that aims to support participation in urbanism. Incubators is intended to develop a user friendly online platform to expand the opportunities for civic engagement in urban design. By combining co-creative software and crowdfunding, this research project implements innovative technologies to provide the means to grow and care for places on a small and local scale. By facilitating the realization of multiple micro-interventions Incubators aims to build on a gradual regeneration of public spaces. The development of the software will be fed by, and experimented through three urban living labs in European cities; Brussels, London and Turin.” (Incubators of Public Spaces research consortium). The Faculty of Architecture of the KU Leuven, in collaboration with the local BRAL organization, was responsible for the Brussels living lab situated at the Josaphat site.

### Infrastructuring

The concept of “infrastructuring” has been introduced into the field of participatory design by Karasti et al. (Karasti, 2014; Karasti & Baker, 2004). It emphasizes the value of building capacity through socio-material resources. In addition Le Dantec and Disalvo (2013) claim this contributes to moving beyond the object-oriented participation process in design.

### Jardin Latinis (JL)

“Jardin Latinis” is the name of the collective and nomadic garden that pioneered the self-proclaimed transitional use at the south west corner of the Josaphat site. More than a garden, Jardin Latinis is aimed to build social cohesion and reconnect people to nature. Apart from growing vegetables, the gardeners invest in the overall biodiversity of Josaphat by digging a lake, explore food production through permaculture, test installations for water recuperation and install communication board to foster the collective care-taking of the “house-garden-and-kitchen interventions”. More information on the Jardin Latinis and its agency can be found in section 00.04.03 “Jardin Latinis”.

### Josaph'Aire (JA)

“Josaph'Aire” is the name of the nonprofit that has been created in April 2017 with the ambition to provide an umbrella structure for the different initiatives within Josaphat's self-proclaimed transitional use. The main objective of the nonprofit is to support the civic initiatives that claim Josaphat as a zone for urban experimentation. Josaph'Aire represent the rather invisible commoning that comes with the “house-garden-and-kitchen” interventions happening at Josaphat. In June 2018 the Josaph'Aire nonprofit mainly invests its energy in negotiating a convention for temporary use with the public owner of the Josaphat site (MSI/SAU). Josaph'Aire is discussed in section 00.04.05 of this book.

### Josaphat en commun

“Josaphat en commun” is the name of the collectively written publication made by the civic platform of “Commons Josaphat” (2015b). In this 40 page counting document a commons-oriented proposal is written down and touches upon several themes that are perceived as fundamental for a commons city: a shared and collective governance, a circular and plural economy, an ecological-urban structure, innovative housing, the public space as a common good, sustainable mobility, an alternative financial model, positive energy and the later added chapter on health and wellbeing. This work has been fundamental to the commons claim that has been made on “Josaphat's ground”. The work on the Josaphat en commun proposal is discussed in REC.2015.03.26 “Debate marathon at Bozar”.

### Josaphat's air

The concept of “Josaphat's air” is used in this thesis to describe the simmering potential, aspirations, dreams, frustrations and . It is a current of air that that we –as commoners- and many others with us –like the MSI- have loaded with visions, ambitions and possibilities. Josaphat's air breathes the lived experiences, designerly ways of knowing, situated knowledges, commons claim, Region's ambitions and more. Acknowledging Josaphat to be both symbolic and symptomatic for Brussels its urban architectural design scene, its air entails simmering promises for an altering future for our city. Many people, associations and institutions invest their heart and soul in the becoming of Josaphat and as such the notion of Josaphat's air aims to demonstrate that the situation around Josaphat's future development is loaded with a lot more energies and meanings than I can grasp and thus are articulated in this doctoral work.

## Josaphat's ground

In chapter 00.03 “Feet on the ground” I describe the different layers that make up Josaphat's ground. The site has its own agency as its atmosphere changes along the seasons, yet Josaphat's ground is also marked as area of regional interest and has a strategic masterplan (RPA/PAD) for which it awaits its operationalization and realization. In addition multiple citizen initiatives seek to have a say in Josaphat's future development and through that help to build up “Josaphat's air”. Through this constellation, Josaphat as a ground provides the foundation for the doctoral research and design practice as well as it provides a stage for some crucial question at stake considering the current state of affairs in (Brussels') urban architectural design.

## Lebendige

The “lebendige” is one of the concepts discussed to describe some of the patterns that identify the practice of the “Commons Architect.e”. Referring to Helmut Leitner's (2015) translation of the “quality without a name” concept of Cristopher Alexander (Alexander et al., 1977), the lebendige relates to the notions of liveliness, whole, alive, free, egoless, lively, vivid and not simply beauty. The lebendige tries to demonstrate the simple yet existential value in the everyday is it is –in the context of this dissertation- performed through the “house-garden-and-kitchen” urban architectural design practice on Josaphat. The notion of the lebendige is discussed fully in section 00.07.01.c “Its lebendige”.

## Lived experiences

Within the implemented method of “design-based participatory action research” the concept of “lived experiences” aims to capture the embodied and strongly sensed learning experience that is obtained in this combined research and design practice. As architect-researcher the more active and intuitive –feeling- stance merges with the rather reflective and distant position of the academic. With the concept of lived experiences I aim to acknowledge the valuable insights and findings derived from the more sensitive learnings, which can only be obtained from an insider perspective. To articulate these experiences, to disseminate them and to offer them a place within the written account of the doctorate I have included reconstructions of lived experiences (REC) as a complementary narration to the foundational reflection (00). In section 00.03.03 “design-based participatory action research” I more clearly discuss this concept and its relation to the other type of “situated knowledges” that are obtained through the doctoral research and design practice.

## Living lab at large (LL)

In relation to the concept of “Josaphat's ground” I address Josaphat as a “living lab at large”. Extensively described in section 00.03.02 “A living lab at large” I unfold the stratification of exploratory approaches that play out on Josaphat. Josaphat is introduced as an academic living lab through the JPI Urban Europe research project of “Incubators of Public Spaces”. In addition its ground has been claimed as a commons lab by the pioneering work the “Commons Josaphat” collective. Moreover the ongoing work of this civic platform results in a civic research that extends Josaphat's living lab beyond the physical boundaries of the place. Moreover, the different self-proclaimed transitional uses evolving on Josaphat reveal the relevance of the living lab as a site of (everyday) action. To bring together these layers of laboratory potential, the combined existence of these various living lab forms are accumulated under the concept of a living lab at large.

### Maison des Possibles (MdP)

The “Maison des Possibles” is a house-like spatial intervention that makes up a part of the “house-garden-and-kitchen” tripartite discussed in chapter 00.04 “House-garden-and-kitchen stories”. This house is being built with the ambition to provide shelter for the community-oriented initiatives at Josaphat. Its building process is an experimentation for a different –physical, financial and organizational- way to produce affordable housing in the city, while its implied program is oriented to incubate urban commons through offering them a physical place to meet, debate, hang around, exchange... The project is discussed more extensively in section 00.04.04 “Maison des Possibles”.

### Modern Architect

I introduce the persona of Modern Architect in section 00.05.02.b “Our city is built by Modern Architect”. This figure provides a caricature of the still dominating stance in urban architectural design that is obsessed with positivist logic, predictability, independence, dominance and self-interest. He is the architectural alter ego of “Economic Man” and as such maintains a close friendship to the profit-driven urban development, this persona embodies. In section 00.05.03.a “Matters of concern”, Modern Architect supports me in addressing the matters of concern that are currently at stake in the urban architectural design of Josaphat, and Brussels at large.

### Patterns

The patterns help to define the being of the “Commons Architect.e”. Relating to the use of patterns by Christopher Alexander (1977) and in the context of the commons (Bollier, 2015), patterns are, in the context of this dissertation, used to describe certain modes that represent the agency of the overall practice of the Arch.e. These modes identify the what of the commons uAD practice, manifest the ways in which it takes place and manifests and situates the where and when of the agency of the Arch.e.

### Participation Architect

The persona of “Modern Architect” has faced a counter agency in the urban architectural design scene, that I in this book personalize through the figure of Participation Architect. Born in the late sixties –when Modern Architect’s “Brusselization” mechanisms seemed limitless, Participation Architect has sought to counter this attitude in an oppositional streak. Yet after introducing this personage in section 00.06.01.a “Participation Architect as counter agent” I also analyze his contemporary shortcomings in section 00.06.02 “Something is in motion”.

### Performative

The “performative” reveals one of the patterns that identify the urban architectural design practice that is embodied by the persona of the “Commons Architect.e”. The concept originates from linguistic philosophy (Austin, 2013) and demonstrates its capacity to generate a new reality through an action of articulation. Signora (2014) and Wolfrum and Brandis (2015) have discussed the concept of the performative in relation to urban architectural design. In the context of this dissertation the political potential of the performative to manifest desires into space is emphasized (Gadhano, 2011; Delicado & Marco., 2011).

### Relational values

The notion of “relational values” is incorporated in the way David Bollier (2016a) has articulated it in “Re-imaging Value”. The concept aims to move away from the economic use of the term value. Moreover relational value also relates to Manzini’s (2015) discussion on the importance of relational goods in contemporary design.

### Recup’Kitchen (RK)

“Recup’Kitchen” is a mobile kitchen that brings people together around the table in public space. This is done by collectively preparing meals made from food surpluses that are afterwards shared at a free to choose donation price. The by civic crowdfunding realized kitchen project is one of the three urban commons that symbolize the “house-garden-and-kitchen” interventions happening on “Josaphat’s ground”. The project is described in section 00.04.02 “Recup’Kitchen”.

### Self-proclaimed transitional use

The “house-garden-and-kitchen” interventions on “Josaphat’s ground” and their underlying practice of the “urban commons” are situated within temporary use. As Josaphat awaits its planned development into an entire new district, urban activists have claimed its south west corner. These practices, however, are aimed for a lasting –and thus transitional- impact. Moreover to me / the practice of the “Commons Architect.e” it is exactly this transitional nature that makes the house-garden-and-kitchen agency act in the field of “urban architectural design”.

The “self-proclaimed” addition reveals the activist agency as the public owner of the site (MSI) does not always acknowledge the transitional nature of the interventions that occupy part of Josaphat’s ground. There is a political stake in setting up this unasked for use of Josaphat, while making the “performative” claim the house-garden-and-kitchen uAD interventions and their underlying commoning aim for transition.

### Situated knowledges

“Situated knowledges” is term introduced by Donna Haraway (1988) to advocate a feminist version of objectivity that positions rational knowledge as partial, located and critical. Arguing that all knowledge is embodied Haraway also addresses the radical multiplicity of local knowledges. Within this thesis I will address that the combined “lived experiences” and “designerly ways of knowing” that are obtained through “design-based participatory action research” consist of such situated knowledges.

### Urban architectural design (uAD)

I have contextualized the doctoral research and design practice within the field of “urban architectural design”. Being closely related to urbanism, yet still part of the architectural discipline, uAD relates to my architectural upbringing at Sint-Lucas Faculty of Architecture of the KU Leuven. I have obtained my Master of Science in Architecture within the trajectory of Urban Architectural Design (KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2012).

This trajectory is based on four pillars: (1) an urban architecture that is a social and critical architecture with a pervasive impact on the urban community, (2) the architect

as go-between, making a spatial interpretation of social issues, (3) the site –and not the program- is the regulatory idea of the project, it implies a research by design of architectural possibilities, and (4) a multitude of perspectives in which the student works on all possible scales and within different disciplines.

### Urban commons

The notion of the “Commons” is a concept that has been discussed by a wide range of scholars and that I –based on a selection of the available literature- have defined as a conglomeration of three key elements: (1) a common resource, (2) a community of commoners that takes stewardship over the (re)production of the common resource, and (3) a commoning practice that involve modes of (re)production through institutions and rules. Important is that this commoning practice should be generative. Today the concept of the commons also increasingly entails a political movement, that promises a transition to move away from the market-state dichotomy.

In addition the notion of “urban commons” is a fairly new type of commons that explores the potential of the traditional (natural) commons into the contemporary increasingly urbanized life context. As a political process the urban commons make and reclaim urban –often- public spaces to be managed collectively and stand against neoliberal mechanisms of individualization and profit-driven agenda’s. It is claimed that practices of urban commoning rethink the city. In this written account I claim the “house-garden-and-kitchen” interventions on “Josaphat’s ground” can be defined as urban commons.

The concepts of the commons and urban commons are discussed in section 00.04.01.b “Acting along the commons claim”.

### Wandering

“Wandering” is defined as one of the design strategies of the “Commons Architect.e”. Being one of the patterns illustrating the way the commons urban architectural design practice manifests itself, the concept of wandering entails serendipity. Based on the paper “Wandering as a design strategy for infrastructuring” (Van Reusel, 2016b) I claim that allowing design processes to take an unstructured course, supports a process of “infrastructuring”.



## 00.11.02 List of abbreviations

AAA	Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée
ARAU	Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaines
A.U.A.I.	Atelier d'Urbanisme, d'Architecture et d'Informatique
BRAL	Urban movement for Brussels
BCR	Brussels Capital Region
CF	crowdfunding
CGT	Constructivist Grounded Theory
CJ	Commons Josaphat
CoBAT	Het Brussels Wetboek van Ruimtelijke Ordening (BWRO) / Le Code Bruxellois de l'Aménagement du Territoire
Comité	Comité de site Josaphat
CS	Crowdsourcing
DIY	Do-It-Yourself
EGEB	Staten Generaal van het Water in Brussel (SGWB) / Etats Généraux de l'Eau à Bruxelles /
GDPO/PRDD	Gewestelijk Plan voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling / Plan Régional de Développement Durable
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
Incubators	Incubators of Public Space
IEB	Inter-Environnement Bruxelles
MdP	Maison des Possibles
La MéMé	Maison Médicale in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe
MSI/SAU	Maatschappij voor Stedelijke Inrichting / Société d'Aménagement Urbain
MVV/SAF	Maatschappij voor de Verwerving van Vastgoed / Société d'Acquisition Foncière
PD	Participatory design
QWAN	Quality Without A Name (Christopher Alexander, 1979)
RPA/PAD	RichtPlan van Aanleg / Plan d'Aménagement Directeur
uAD	Urban architectural design
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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